INCLUDING YOU *and* ME

STRICKLAND GILLILAN

Yours Sincerely,

Strickland Gillilan

INCLUDING
YOU AND ME

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BY

STRICKLAND GILLILAN

Author of
"Including Finnigin"

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DEDICATED TO
THE SAME LADY MENTIONED IN MY OTHER BOOK
WITH THE SAME SENTIMENTS

Now I haven't just tried to be "funny,"
And I haven't just tried to be "smart."
Nor yet is it only for money —
'Tis largely a matter of heart!
Long after the laughter has ended,
Years after the income is spent,
May the laughs and the loves I have blended
Still deepen some human's content.

PREFACE

The more than kindly reception accorded my other collection of verses ("Including Finnigin") so encouraged my publishers that they dared to produce another volume; this time excluding the piece that had given my stuff its first vogue, but including a lot of mighty intimate discussions of things pertaining to those two delightful folks—you and me.

(The foregoing is a longer sentence than the one beginning the preface to my previous book, but you know the second offense always brings a longer sentence.)

One time there was a prophet (know your Bible?) who was sharply scolded for presuming to call "common" or "unclean" a lot of familiar, every-day things. For myself I have always held that the mere fact that a thing was primitively human, and well-known by all of us, was not just for that necessarily to be treated with scorn or neglect. That very commonness (maybe I'd better say universality) made the thing, in my stubborn way of think-

ing, all the finer—made it a sort of mental and emotional solder to weld us somewhat cantankerous humans into a warm-hearted, sympathetic brotherhood—the pass-word or distress-sign of a world-wide, race-long "lodge."

So that is the sort of thing I have handled in the verses included in this new volume; and it was with that idea imbedded in my mind and heart that I wrote them in the first place.

I hope you'll like them; that they may warm the "cockles of your heart" and make you feel closer to a lot of folks you had thought inferior to you. And I also humanly hope I've appealed to your vanity enough, by telling you things you already knew, to make you clasp the little volume more closely and say:

"My, that fellow's smart! Why, he knows the very same things I know!"

STRICKLAND GILLILAN.

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INCLUDING YOU AND ME

WHEN WORK IS THROUGH

WHAT joy to have some honest, self-supporting work to do —
And babes to run and meet us in the dusk when we are through!
Great work, that helps our fellowman, that fills the big world's need —
Some work that serves a purpose far above our human greed!
Just that I want — with honest pay, the same I wish for you;
And babes to run and meet you in the dusk when work is through.

There may be higher aims, although I cannot understand
Just how they could be higher; whether soft or calloused hand
Perform the task assigned by Fate and kindly circumstance.
'Tis work like this and aims like this that make the world advance.
The pay comes thrice — food for your brood, joy in the work you do,
And babes that run to meet you in the dusk when work is through.

A SAFE PLAN

YOU can't go wrong in this: When you discern
In some one's work or life a clever turn
Or worthy deed, go to him and declare
Your feelings on the subject, then and there.
Don't sit around and whisper, "That is good!"
Go say it — make your pleasure understood.
Your word of approbation oft may come
When with discouragement his heart is numb.

Be not afraid you'll make the fellow vain.
If in his skull reside a trace of brain
He knows enough that others can not know
About his weaknesses, to dull the glow
Of vaunting pride within him. So your word
Of cheer will come as song of springtime bird
To winter-sick humanity; and he
Will thank his God for you, on bended knee.

Go to the worker, praise him as it seems
To you he has deserved. And then his dreams
Will grow more tangible. His strengthened hand
Take on the touch of those who understand
Themselves and their full power. He will grow
As ne'er he could have grown had you been slow
In voicing your approval. Shout the song
Of praise you think deserved — you can't go wrong!

SAYIN' HOWDY

SAYIN' "Howdy," all th' day
To th' folks along th' way!
That's the method he pursued
Whether glum or glad his mood.
Know 'em? Not by face or name,
But he knowed 'em just th' same.
Knowed that they was human things
Just as hoboes are, an' kings.

Sayin' "Howdy" when he met
Josey Smith, as black as jet,
Sayin' it in that same tone
When he met big Sam Malone,
With a dozen farms or so;
Chucklin' "Sam's as good as Joe
If he's careful"— just that way,
Sayin' "Howdy," all th' day.

"When I git t' heaven," he 'lows,
"Where they's crowns on all th' brows,
If they's any that kin rise
With 'is right hand t' th' skies
An' declare I ever rode
'Long apast 'im on th' road
An' left out that 'Howdy' thing,
I'll give up my crown, by jing!"

Sayin' "Howdy," all th' day
To th' folks along th' way!

Him nor us will never know
How he helped folks down below
By th' friendliness he showed
To th' folks beside th' road.
You can't find no better way
Than just Howdyin' folks all day!

SHE LIKES TO DRIVE

SHE likes to drive. We go out in the sleigh
And ere we've gone a noticeable way
She says: "Those gloves of yours are awful thin —
Just see what thick ones my two hands are in!
You'd better let me drive awhile until
You get your hands relieved of such a chill"—
She likes to drive.

She likes to drive. And when I (knowing well
Just what she wants, although she wouldn't tell)
Give up the reins, she turns the horse's head
Into some road whence other sleighs have fled;
And then one runner drops into a ditch
That somehow gives her lissome form a pitch —
She likes to drive.

She likes to drive. And on that lonely way
When she, to keep the balance of the sleigh,
Has bent in my direction — don't I know,
Or am I bashful still and shameful slow?
Then — then she gives a well-bred little shriek
And says: "Don't — that leaves wet spots on my cheek"—
She likes to drive.

She likes to drive. No matter if I wear
The thickest lamb's-wool mittens, she'll declare

My poor hands must be freezing; and she'll take
The ribbons from my grasp, whereat I make
No murmur, but proceed to do my best
To please the maid my coldness has distressed —
She likes to drive.

FOLKS NEED A LOT OF LOVING

FOLKS need a lot of loving in the morning;
The day is all before, with cares beset —
The cares we know, and those that give no warning;
For love is God's own antidote for fret.

Folks need a heap of loving at the noontime —
The battle lull, the moment snatched from strife —
Halfway between the waking and the croontime,
While bickering and worriment are rife.

Folks hunger so for loving at the nighttime,
When wearily they take them home to rest —
At slumber-song and turning-out-the-light time —
Of all the times for loving, that's the best!

Folks want a lot of loving every minute —
The sympathy of others and their smile!
Till life's end, from the moment they begin it,
Folks need a lot of loving all the while.

THIS IS FINAL

WHEN you are a fool, you're as big a fool
As ever the other fellow
Appears to your eyes — and you so wise! —
When his cerebrum's mellow.
This is hard to say in a pleasant way,
But it's genuine information —
Just tamp that down in your calabash
And start a conflagration.

When you are wrong you're just as wrong
As the biggest fool you know
When he's not right — you may want to fight,
But this statement's got to go.
I hate to be snippy and sassy and lippy
To one in your dignified station,
But shove that down in your jimmy-pipe
And start incineration.

To a man up a tree you're as foolish as me,
I'm fallible even as you.
Every self-centered cuss knows he's wiser than us,
We'll never admit that it's true.
We can none of us boast who's least brainy or most.
No reason for self-gratulation.
Let's put that down in our clay dudeens
And start a conflagration.

AFTER SCHOOL

WHEN home from school's long day he drifts
And to my gaze his fresh face lifts,
I read the tale of all the joys
And sorrows that are every boy's —
I knew them once. I feel them yet,
Through later living's deeper fret.
But still I hold him close, and say
"Son, tell me all about your day."

He tells me — whimpering o'er each grief,
And laughing next in swift relief:
The big, bad boy who hid his hat;
The girl who slipped from where she sat,
To meet with Teacher's well-earned frown;
And how the littlest boy fell down!
I list — not that I do not know,
But only that I love him so.

When, at life's troublous school day's close,
Each world-worn pupil homeward goes,
Straight to the Father's eyes we'll raise
Our own, prepared for blame or praise.
He'll slip an arm around, and say:
"Child, tell me all about your day."
Not that Our Father does not know,
But only that He loves us so.

YOU AND ME BOTH

I HAVE a lot of grievous faults.
My pilgrim way is filled with halts
And limps and stoppings by the road.
When discipline applies her goad
I wince. I often note (with grief
That holds no prospect of relief
Through future mornings, nights and noons)
That every one is full of prunes,
Including me. But I cheer up
And feel joy brimming in my cup
When I look closer still and see
How patient I have been with me!

I know of none from whom I would
So much of foolishness have stood,
As I have daily borne when I
Was the offender. Should I try,
I could not take from others what
I've stood from me, without a swat
On the offender's eye or nose.
You'd find it hard to presuppose
How many things I can excuse
Whene'er the miscreant wears my shoes.
'Twould make old Job seem peeved, to see
How patient I can be with me!

A TALK TO THE BOY

COME, boy, to your dad. Let me tell you some things
Of the man who loved me as I'm now loving you.
For the heart is a pendulum, heavy, that swings
Aye forward and back, as all pendulums do.
And tonight, mine has swung far away to the time
When your dad had a dad — just as you have, my son;
A dad to whose arms I was welcome to climb
When his day in the cornfield or meadow was done.

I crept into arms that were stronger, my lad;
And his hands — O, so tender! — were harder than mine.
For the world had been harsh with the dad of your dad.
Yet I wish that my soul were as gentle and fine
As the one roughly clad in that body of his
That so lavishly gave of its strength for the one
Who now shelters you. And my prayer's burden is
That you may think thus of your father, my son.

What I've gained, I have gained; his the heavier cost.
He, in embryo, held all the things I have done.

Yet I fear — gravely fear there are things I have
lost
That sadly diminish the triumph, my son.
So lie close, little man; there's so little we know
Except that I love you and you can love me.
And I smile with content that you're loving me so,
And am glad in that love, as my dad used to be.

THEIR CHIEF REGRET

WE wan't such a gloomy bunch o' guys, an' we didn't dwell on fret,
But for some fool notion or other, why we called it Camp Regret.
Whether 'twas 'cause we was middle-aged an' our eye-teeth cut, or whether
We'd a bitter streak when we named it, we all of us, hell for leather,
Tuck up with th' name, an' it stuck. One night when we all set 'round th' fire
An' each was doin' heavy work to prove him th' biggest liar,
Jim Marshall says: "I wonder what, as we've roamed from coast to coast,
Us old sour doughs has ever done that we regret th' most."

I bet for seven minutes or more they wasn't a guy that spoke.
I can't remember which of th' boys that age-long silence broke.
And th' tales that follered — not one of th' lads had loosened so much before.
I reckon one of you writer chaps would 'a' got a hefty store
O' stuff fer th' tales you write an' sell if you could 'a' been around,
But they wouldn't 'a' told th' yarns they told had a stranger face been found

About th' fire. An' when they was done, one feller spoke again
An' said: "We've none of us hit th' mark, or I'm no judge of men."

Then all agreed they would write it down, their chieftest-of-all regret.
An' we passed a pencil and paper 'round to each of us, as we set,
An' every feller wrote it out — th' thing he was sorriest of,
Of all the things in all his life of hardship, hate and love.
And when they was wrote, we gathered 'em — was none of 'em to be signed ——;
Jim Marshall read 'em aloud to us with 'is eye that wasn't blind.
An' every feller had penned th' same an' these here words was it:
"I wish I'd wrote to mother, more, while she was livin' yit."

WATCH PICTURES

I'D show the photograph I wear
Inside my watch, did I not care
What happened next. But if I did
He'd pull the picture of his kid
Or wife on me, and start to tell
A lot of guff I know so well —
How can a man so thoughtless be
When I'd discourse of Mine and me?

I wear a picture in my watch —
A reg'lar picture; not a botch!
It is a picture of my frau
When she was younger far than now.
I show the thing to other men
Who, if I do not leave just then,
Pull something of the kind on me,
Though why they do so I can't see.

I've learned to pick and choose my time
For pulling off this watch-case crime.
I wait until my train has blown
For whate'er stop I call my own,
Then show the picture quick; and run
Before the other's deed is done.
A deathless mystery it is —
Why he should wish to show me his!

RELATIVELY SPEAKING

MY name is Spink. Wher'er I go
Some one inquires if or no
I am related to the Spink
Who used to live at Spotted Mink,
Four miles beyond the Harwood place —
Some day I'll push somebody's face
For taking up my time to grin
And start with, "Are you any kin?"

I know the look that creeps into
The human eye when he gets through
Having my name repeated to him
And when the name at last gets through him
I see the question coming out
From his garrulous social spout:
"Spink, Spink — I know Hank Spink, an' Min —
I wonder if you're any kin."

And then, no matter how I say
I'm not, I can't head off this jay.
He'll go on naming Spinks to me
And scrambling 'round my family tree
To show me he's a knowing guy.
Some day I'll bash him in the eye
And soak him on the fatuous grin
For asking: "Are you any kin?"

WERE I WEALTHY

WERE I a wealthy citizen
I'd help the worthy poor
Who daily cudgel off the wolf
That lingers 'round the door.
I'd feed the hungry, heal the sick,
I'd clothe the naked, too;
There'd hardly be an end to all
The kindly things I'd do.

Were I a wealthy citizen
I'd take each orphan chick
And send him to the finest school —
I'd do that mighty quick.
I'd say to worried widows who
Could see no light ahead
"Fear not, for I'll protect you all —
Think not that hope is dead."

Were I a wealthy citizen
I'd seek out struggling youths
Who fought 'gainst Penury to gain
Fair Learning's hidden truths.
I'd let them go through college till
They reached the outfield fence
And not one dollar should they pay —
'Twould be at my expense.

Were I a wealthy citizen
(Let's deal with facts a while)

I'd lie awake at nights and scheme
How to increase my pile.
I'd sit around on Easy street
And plan and plan and plan
A hundred other brand-new ways
To skin my fellow man.

WE CAN ALWAYS LEARN

NO man is wholly foolish, just as none is wholly wise;
The world has precious few extremes, you'll find if you'll examine.
The man who's partly deaf, you'll note, has extra useful eyes —
This "wholly helpless" notion is the plainest sort of gammon.
You hear a fellow work his mouth from morning's break till night,
You're sure he's saying nothing, you condemn him without ruth.
But listen patiently to him — his chatter is a fright,
But 'mid the rubbish he emits you'll find some grains of truth.

There's none so big a fool but that he knows some things that you
Or even I could scarce find out in all our life or longer.
There's none so wise but if you probe his depths an hour or two,
You'll see a lot of little points on which he might be stronger.
So you, though you be foolish — yes, and I, though I be wise! —
Had best leave off in later years the rashness of our youth

And learn to listen even when the pinhead's spin-
drift flies —
Amid the chaff his voice gives forth will be some
grains of truth.

THEIR HERITAGE

THE lovings that we used to get,
The dreams that came before life's fret,
The pleasures once we held so dear
Before the yellow leaf and sere
And other things accounted drear —
The children have them now.

The rosy cheeks we used to wear,
The daily thrills ere came our care,
The coastings down the snowy hill
With juvenile, uncanny skill
And now and then a joyous spill —
The children get them now.

The heartaches over little things,
The hurts from playmates' thoughtless flings,
The checkings of each grown-up boss,
Who must scold some one when he's cross,
The spankings — who could count them loss? —
The children get them now.
Thank goodness!
The children have them now.

ALONG THE RIVER

DAYS along the river are the days you can't forget!
There you lose your worries and there you fling your fret.
Days along the river when the sun is shining warm,
When the air's so balmy that you couldn't think of storm;
When the pink spring beauties and the yellow violets
Make a fellow glad as any fellow ever gets;
Dreamy plash and gurgle as the ripples slumber by —
Days along the river 'neath a young May sky!

Days along the river where the stream runs slow —
You must watch the ripples to see which way they flow.
Picking muddy driftwood and drying it for fire —
Down along the river is the Land of Heart's Desire.
Miracles are 'round you and you feel that you have found
Nature in her workshop; where the alchemistic ground
Vies with magic weather in the wondrous feats you see —
Down along the river is the place for you and me!

THE GREATEST GIFT

IT wasn't the money you gave the chap
When you found him down and out —
'Twas the faith you restored when you bettered his hap
That had filled him with bitter doubt.

It wasn't the food that your money bought,
Or the clothes he had needed so,
But the spirit change that your kindness wrought
When you set hope's lamp aglow.

It isn't the human of blood and bone
Served most when you heed love's call —
'Tis a human heart just like your own;
It hungers most of all.

DAUGHTER

COOK has quit and mother's cleaning off the
kitchen shelf;
Shelf is high and mother's short — has to stretch
herself.
After she has done with that, the pantry must be
swept —
One would think the cook forgot where the broom
was kept.
After that she'll take the stuff from the ice-box
stalls,
Wash it out and put things back; roll some butter
balls,
Beat some eggs and whip some cream and bake
the Sunday pies —
Daughter's at gymnasium, taking exercise!

Last week, when the housemaid left, mother
cleaned the rugs —
Got the big ones on the line after many tugs;
Waxed the hardwood living room, pulled the heavy
weight
Of that big lead polisher — lunch made daughter
late
Getting to the downtown place where the classes
meet
For the calisthenics that will put her on her feet.
Seems to Ma a husky girl with observant eyes
Might not have to leave her home for some exer-
cise.

IN SIGHT OF HOME

ALL day I wander blithesomely adown each
roadway turn;
I seek new pastures restlessly and ramble on
and on.
But as the red sun westers down, I feel the primal
yearn
To be in sight of home again before the light is
gone.

The distant hilltop lures my feet, I hunger for
its view;
What lies beyond the darkling wood — I needs
must run and see.
All day I bravely plunge ahead in search of vistas
new,
But when the twilight comes, my home calls
lovingly to me.

Twilight and home are comrade things — would
they might always meet!
My heart breaks every evening when I cannot
see my own.
The trip, the crowd, the stranger voice through
all the day are sweet,
But dusk brings on the sorrow that I needs must
bear alone.

When, after life's long journeyings, your sun slips
gently down
The copper-burnished western sky and there's a
hint of gloam,
May you not see the stranger hill or wood before
you frown —
May life's sweet evening shadows find your soul
in sight of Home!

HIS LITTLE GIRL

SHE brought his dinner to him every day
He worked upon the job. An old tin pail
Was what she brought it in and took away
After he'd emptied it from base to bail.

She always wore an old sunbonnet — blue,
With white checks on it. You could see her stop
And look each way until she fully knew
No train was coming; then she'd madly pop

Across the tracks, as if old Nick pursued,
And walk up, grinning at Ted Burke — her pa —
Old Ted, who never was what's called a dude,
And looked as plain as any other "chaw."

That is, to us he seemed like common clay;
But not to her! That kid would stand and look
At Ted as if he were the Queen of May,
And lovely as a picture in a book.

One day she didn't come to bring his lunch.
The next Ted asked to be let off awhile.
He stayed so long we others got a hunch
That maybe something'd happened to the smile

Beneath the bonnet. And when he came back
To work one morning, with his pail in hand,
And with his hat band bound about with black —
We didn't have to ask, to understand.

"GET TO" VERSUS "GOT TO"

PERHAPS no other words so much alike
Upon so many opposites may strike.
Upon their slight grammatic difference
Depend a lot of things that give offense
And cause deep disagreement between those
Who elsewise would agree like bee and rose.

For instance, farmers think the engineers
"Get to" ride on the cars, long years on years.
The engineer, within his smoke-filled cab,
Roars past the granger and exclaims, "By grab!
He gets to live out in the fresh, sweet soil
And not breathe coal dust, soot and reeking oil."

While of his job the farmer thinks he's "got to"
Do things the engineer's job tells him not to,
So he who runs the locomotive knows
He's "got to" tear along those twin steel rows
Till death or pensioned leisure bids him quit —
"Get to" and "got to" aren't alike, a bit.

Wife thinks that hubby "gets to" roam around
Away from home where pleasing scenes are found.
Hubby well knows he's "got to" do the thing
That can't be done without his taking wing
From that loved home where wifey "gets to" stay
Though she thinks "got to" all the livelong day.

YOU CAN'T MISTAKE

IF, when you walk into a little room
Where sit some niggard souls in chosen gloom,
You note a furtive look and lowered voice
Proving your presence is not of their choice —
And if you catch at one strong word of blame,
No matter if your ear have missed the name,
There'll be no error credited to you
If you state calmly, "Sirs, that is not true."

Nine cases out of ten they have no proof
Of what they say; the warp and e'en the woof
May be false utterly; and they may be
Besmirching one far worthier than we —
Destroying that they can not build anew.
So take a chance and say, "That is not true."

Aye when you hear a brother's name defiled
With accusations damning, proofless, wild,
Defend, though blindly. God Himself would say
A good word for the worst of men, today.
For if the man be guilty of some wrong —
Let him that's sinless criticise this song! —
The more he needs some friend that's truest blue —
Be that one friend, and say, "That is not true."

MAN OR BABY?

ALL of our talk is of engines and horses and lions and fires;
All of our thoughts are a man's thoughts, while he's so broad awake;
All of our ways are a man's ways, all that tradition requires;
But Nature — the tyrant! — is certain her merciless toll to take.
For when he is sleepy we're nothing but a poor little bit of a thing
With a father as foolish as fathers have been since the world began.
So I jealously hold him and rock him and Slumberland melodies sing —
When he's asleep he's a baby, though when he's awake he's a man!

Just at the age when the man-child would fain lay his babyhood down —
Call him "a baby" — you've hurt him past power of surgeon to heal.
Learning the grownuppish swagger, learning the swashbuckler's frown,
Trying to act as a man acts, to feel as the grown ones feel;
Stretching his stride to its utmost, proud to keep step with his dad!
Scorning to show emotion, æons too ancient to weep!

But Night, no respecter of persons, refuses to
humor the lad —
He's a man when awake, but, God bless him,
he's a baby when he is asleep —
The thing that makes parents love-mad —
Just a wee, helpless babe, when asleep.

THE UNCONSCIOUS MISSIONARY

ONE time I knowed a feller 't didn't claim to be no saint —
Which some o' them as claims they are knows mighty well they ain't —
An' ev'ry time I left him, as o' course I often would,
He'd give my hand a squeeze an' say, "Good-bye, my boy. Be good."

He said it kind o' jaunty-like, as if he didn't keer,
But somehow what that feller said kep' ringin' in my ear;
An' ev'ry step I tuck fer half a mile f'm where we'd stood
Them words kep' up 'ith me an' said, "Be good, be good, be good."

An' all th' hull day at my work in meetin' up 'ith men,
When I'd a chance to do some dirt, I'd think a minute — then
Like some fool tune ye can't fergit, but al'ys wisht ye could,
Them words 'd come a-limpin' 'long, "Be good, be good, be good."

Some blame loud preachin's hit me like th' water hits a duck,
An' if some preachers fished fer me they've had tarnation luck;

But that plain sinner's made me be lots nearder
what I should
By al'ys sayin', keerless like, "Be good, my boy,
be good."

OUT FOR A WALK

MY tiny son walks out with me
Along the sweet suburban road —
Has many a cheery scout with me
While chattering our own love code;
He finds a reddened leaf perchance,
A gaudy butterfly's lost wing,
A stone from which the sun rays glance,
Or some such childish-cherished thing.

All these he bears to me and places
Within my hand (as I have halted
To reconcile our varied paces),
And says with look and tone exalted:
"See, Father, what I found back there;
You missed it when you sauntered by;
Your big, strong hand takes better care
Of these — my treasures — than can I."

We are but children, walking out
With Father. All the things we find —
Gems now, but later viewed with doubt —
We bear to Him, love — strong and kind,
And say: "These big, safe hands of Thine
Can take much better care than we
Of these — our treasures — rare and fine;
We trust, dear God, our all with Thee!"

THE WORST THING

FAILURE, when you have done your best, is bad.
I know a thing a thousand times as sad:
The sting that failure leaves within your breast —
An ache that knows no surcease, gives no rest —
When you recall you did not do your best.

HE KNEW MY FATHER

THE look of him was wholly commonplace —
His grizzled beard, worn garments, furrowed face.
It wanted all my life-learned poise to keep
Suppressed an adverse note that strove to creep
Into my judgment as I viewed the man,
So shaped he seemed on utter failure's plan.
His was the seldom-traveler's furtive look,
Cowering uneasy in his red-plush nook.

To me at length for friendliness he turned;
For human fellowship this lone man yearned.
I humored his pathetic eagerness
To know my name, my calling, my address.
"Your father's name?" He trembled as he spoke;
And when I told him, o'er his features broke
A look of satisfaction deep and sweet
As if I'd made his cup of joy replete.

"I knowed your pap — why, him an' me was chums!"
And then I knew the happiness that comes
To every father-hungry grown-up lad
Who never ceases longing for the dad
So little understood in callow days —
So quick to blame he seemed, so slow to praise;
So wished-for now, when wisdom holds her throne,
That for our disrespect we might atone!

About that head, erstwhile so commonplace,
A halo formed, of glory and of grace.
He'd known and loved the father I had known;
As boy friends intimate the two had grown;
I clung to him — I all but held his hand,
This magic guest from an enchanted land.
Now with a thrill his voice in memory comes:
"I knowed your pap — why, him an' me was
chums!"

THE LITTLE LOCAL TRAIN

I THRILL and gape at limiteds, close-vestibuled clean through;
I marvel at their majesty, as other people do.
I goggle at the high-backed hog with smoke-stack like a wart;
That makes bystanders jump and dodge to hear her starting snort;
She's splendor from her tail-lights to the bo that's riding blind;
But, oh, the local train that serves the lowly of mankind!

A bunty thing she is, of course, with just two coaches on —
And one of them half baggage. But the poor folks know the "con,"
And chat with him and "braky," calling them by Christian name —
The limited's a hummer, but she's loser in the game!
Far better than her brass-railed perch for wealthy folks, behind,
I love the local train that serves the poorer of mankind!

Past everything but county-seats — e'en missing some of them —
The limited goes whirling by upon the big "main stem;"

She busts the village ordinance that says, "Ten miles an hour;"
Just hoots derisive at such burgs and puts on extra power.
The town the local hurries through would sure be hard to find —
The little local run that serves the humbler of mankind.

The trippers on the limited have tickets that have cost
A score or more of dollars — why, a state or so they've crossed!
The local carries shabby folks with fifteen cents to spend,
But theirs is just as big a trip — has starting, middle, end!
The limited's the classy string; but greater, in my mind,
The two-coach local train that serves the plainer of mankind.

A DISMAL FAILURE

I TRIED to be unhappy, for a girl had jilted me;
I tried to be unhappy — being less would cruel be;
But a southern wind was blowing and my breakfast had been good —
A southern wind was blowing and the birds sang in the wood.
The sun was shining brightly and the day was sweet and mild —
I tried to be unhappy, but was gladsome as a child!

I tried to be unhappy, for my fortune had been lost;
I'd had to sell my earthly goods for less than they had cost.
I tried to be unhappy, for the kind world pitied me
And wondered if another pleasant moment I should see.
I tried to be unhappy, but as I approached my house
My laughing baby met me and we held a wild carouse!

I tried to be unhappy when upon my temple gleamed
The first white hair of middle age — how less than I had dreamed

Were life's rewards! And then I thought how
richly I was blest
To have the wife and bairns about as I approached
the west.
I laughed aloud, unblushingly, and caroled forth
my glee —
I've tried to be unhappy, but have failed most
dismally!

GET UP AND GO ON

YOUR wee foot slipped on the floor, my son;
Get up and go on!
Your game of tag is far from done —
Get up and go on.
That dimpled knee got an awful hurt —
See the roughed-up skin and the ground-in dirt!
But you're good for a stronger, swifter spurt —
Get up and go on.

Sometimes there are terrible bruises, lad,
But get up and go on.
And your father's arms — if it's quite too bad
To get up and go on —
Will gather you close and gently say:
"There, there! Has it spoiled the baby's play?"
But you'll find in the end that the better way
Is "get up and go on."

All through your life it will be the same.
Get up and go on.
Grin over your pain and play the game —
Get up and go on.
For folk will watch when your falls take place —
Will watch the expression on your face
And accurately will adjudge your case,
So get up and go on.

And whenever the fall too cruel seems
To get up and go on,

When hope has hidden its faintest gleams,
  Get up and go on!
And the arms of the Father-who-knows-what's-best
Will hold you close to a loving breast
Till your baffled soul finds strength in rest —
  Get up and go on!

EYES

GIVE me back the boy eyes,
The seeing-naught-but-joy eyes,
The pleasure-cannot-cloy eyes,
With which I used to see.
Take away these old eyes,
Give back the boyhood-bold eyes,
The all-that-gleams-is-gold eyes,
That brought such bliss to me.

Oh, to have the clear eyes,
The naught-in-sight-that's-drear eyes,
The never-shed-a-tear eyes,
That served me as a boy!
Give me back the bright eyes,
The every-soul-is-white eyes,
The things-must-come-out-right eyes,
That brought me only joy.

No — most I love the dim eyes,
The let-him-have-his-whim eyes,
The oft-with-tears-aswim eyes,
Of age's gentler heart.
I'd rather have the kind eyes,
The helped-out-with-the-mind eyes,
Than any boyhood's blind eyes
That only saw in part!

A HOPE SONG

THE clouds were red when the dawn came up —
Were red with a glint of copper sheen.
The chalice of morn was a glittering cup
And the world was gay in the dewy green.
But the sun rose high and the clouds grew gray
With only a softened silver glow.
And the world looked old and far from gay,
But burdened instead with a weight of woe.

Yet at night when the sun goes down again
In the ruddy west, we shall see once more
The gold and the glitter past tongue or pen,
Shall see the red of the dawn — and more!
Our lives and our days are alike in this:
Both have their glorious morns, then come
The gray and the grime that we may not miss,
Till hope shines forth in the evening's gloam.

BACK-FIRES

ONCE when I roamed the prairies wild
With Uncle Bill, he told me: "Child,
See where that line of blazes runs
Along that ridge? As sure as guns
That fire will get us if we shouldn't
Fix things just so she fairly couldn't."
Then at his feet he dropped a match
And burned a great big safety patch
In which we stood until the fire
All round about had spent its ire.

I've seen that back-fire notion used
A lot since then — sometimes abused.
When one o'er-nosey shows that he
Is wild with curiosity
To know a thing that surely is
Not e'en related to his biz,
We start a back-fire in his mind
By telling him, just for a blind,
The very thing he wants to know —
It disappoints the fellow so!

And when the gossips are purveying
Some dirty scandal that's conveying
To people's minds a false impression,
You may create a sweet digression
By starting, publicly as they,
A story of that self-same jay

That emphasizes something fine
In him. As that goes down the line
It takes the sting from out the other —
And your back-fire has saved a brother.

'ROUND FATHER'S GRIP

WHEN Father's come from some long trip
We chicks all kneel around his grip
And try to keep our faces straight
And not look tickled while we wait
Till he has hugged our mother tight
And kissed her twice with all his might.
We're glad to see him, too, but then
First thing when he's got home again
From some great long and busy trip
We want to see what's in his grip!

Then Father kneels among us there
And digs a key-ring from somewhere
And looks as if he had forgot
To bring us things — we know he's not!
We gather close while he unlocks
The grip. Then each one gets a box
Or parcel tied up with a string
Or some such gifty-looking thing
That's 'zactly right. We squeal: "Oh, Dad!
The nicest things we've ever had!"

It's not just what we get, you see,
That makes us glad. For it might be
If Father came home once without
The gifts for us we'd give a shout
And hug him hard. But oh, it's great
That when he's in some other State

'Way off from home he thinks of us,
From ten-year Blanche to one-year Gus,
So when he's come home from his trip
We kneel and giggle 'round his grip!

OUR CAPACITY

TEN times I've said: "My soul can bear no more."
Ten times, "Life holds no more of joy," I've said.
My mind was sick, my mind was wounded sore,
And hope's last vestige from my sky had fled.
But looking back to those most hopeless hours
When I was sure no light could come again,
I look across a field of sun and showers —
I've known both keener pain and joy since then.

We know not what the heart can bear until
The burdens come. The lighter loads we've borne
Have strengthened us for fardel and for hill —
We shall wear sorrows greater than we've worn.
Yet after every deeper dark comes light
Such as we ne'er had dreamed on earth could be.
Then play the human game with all your might —
Life's hoarding many a prize for you and me!

WHEN I AM WRONG

WHEN I am wrong, Lord, courage me to own it;
To say, "Forgive me for the wrong I did."
Drive out the wild desire to condone it
And keep the grievous fault within me hid.
Yet while I honestly admit my sin,
Keep off the friend who likes to rub it in!

When I have erred, Lord, teach me to admit it;
To clear all others of suspicion's taint;
To own — and bear the punishment to fit it —
The wrong in me, nor feel the least restraint.
Yet while I'd bear the pains my sinnings win,
Keep from my clutches him who'd rub it in!

Lord, all my rank transgressions I would own;
All my profuse shortcomings I'd admit;
I'd shout them out in any sort of tone
To keep some innocent from being "it."
But — here my rebel promptings would begin —
I cannot love the folks who'd rub it in!

A DIXIE LULLABY

LAUGHIN' wif yo' dinneh in de cohneh ob yo' mouf —
Sweetes' pickaninny in dis po'tion ob de Souf.
Lookin' at yo' mammy fum de tail-eend ob yo' eye —
Make has'e dar, brack baby, fo' yo' meal-time slippin' by.
Make dem sof' lips wiggle — yo's a triflin' li'l coon!
Mammy up en take yo' dinneh fum yo', putty soon!

Laughin' wif yo' dinneh in de cohneh ob yo' mouf--
Yo' ain't fear'd de crops will fail en ain't askeered o' drouf.
Rollin' roun' dem shiny eyes at mammy — li'l scamp!
Mammy she ain't lub yo' none — she fling yo' ter a tramp!
Huh-uh! Nee'n't pucker up yo' baby lips en cry!
Mammy gwine ter lub yo' twell de salty sea run dry.

Sleepin' wif his dinneh in de cohneh ob his mouf —
Wahm lips on de proudest mammy boozum in de Souf.

Belly full o' dinneh en his skeer all druv away —
Lawd! Huccome dey cain't stay small fohebeh
en a day?
Bofe dem shiny windehs got dey shettahs farstened
down —
Fix dat baid, Sis' Lindy, w'ile he slumbehin' so
soun'!

THE EVER NEW

HE knew that he knew all of fatherhood:
He had read books about it; had observed.
He knew quite all there was in it of good;
How to unselfish sacrifice it nerved
Men of the feeblest courage. He was wise
On that and all themes else below the skies!

One day his young wife hid her blushing face
Against his breast and whispered something sweet.
A thrill, of which he ne'er had known a trace
In all his past, stirred him from head to feet.
To man's full stature in a trice he grew;
At last life's deepest springs he knew — he knew!

Now when, upon his awkward, untaught arm,
He holds the helpless mite — Hers and his own,
And feels that from earth's most resistless harm
He could defend it with that arm alone,
He understands as ne'er he understood —
As though he had invented fatherhood!

TO A WIFE

WE have had our little sorrows
We have known our little pain;
We have had our dark tomorrows,
Had our sunshine after rain.

But the worst of all our losses,
Loyal comrade of my heart,
We have found the little crosses
That we tried to bear apart!

Care we jointly bore proved blessing;
Care each bore alone proved blight —
Till, with humbly frank confessing,
Each returned to each for light;

Till we learned the law unfailing
That controls our happiness:
Prayer and tears are unavailing,
Prayed or shed in selfishness.

Then, though bleak or blithe the weather,
Be the landscape gray or green,
Let us cling so close together
Not a care can creep between.

MY CHRISTMAS SUPREME

'TWAS an old, blue yarn stocking, white-toed
and white-heeled,
That our mother had knit — (we had seen her
When we stayed 'round the fire with an ear that
had "bealed"—
Sat with pained but submissive demeanor
Because of the husking we thus might escape
In the blustering weather outside).
'Twas this very same stocking we hung by its nape
That eve ere the yule's joyful tide.

'Twas a mean little room — should we see it to-
day —
With chromos ill-framed 'round the wall.
When you came from the porch, you were in —
right away!
No vestibule, storm door or hall.
For we lived as our forefathers, rugged and
poor —
Have a care! Do not murmur, "oppressed!"
We were gentle at heart in the guise of the boor.
And pride ruled supreme in each breast.

. . . . . .

'Twas a pair of suspenders, some candy, a book
And a splendid big orange I felt
When — heart in my throat, too excited to look —
Next morn on the hearthstone I knelt.

"That all?" you inquire. Oh, you wealth-
pampered thing!
Suppress the contempt in your tone.
With those princeliest gifts I was rich as the king
Who lolls on his vassal-girt throne.

On Christmases since, all the pitiful cost
Of the presents that morning I found
From the price of my gifts could be carelessly lost
And roll off, unmissed, on the ground.
But something of wealth has been taken away
And I wish — or at least so I feel —
I could trade it all back for the joy hid away
In that sock with the white toe and heel.

FORGETTING THE BOY

I DARE not ever think of him;
For when I do my eyes grow dim
And all the heart of me goes out
In one long, agonizing shout
To reach him there, across the miles
That bar me from his frowns and smiles.
So, since he can not hear my call,
I will not think of him at all!

I dare not think of him, because
It makes my very breathing pause
Until the lump that's in my throat
Goes, and a vastly cheerier note
My daily song may dominate.
And thus, from early until late
My will between us lifts a wall —
I do not think of him at all!

An unkind custom has decreed
That man — however dire his need,
Though half a woman, by his birth —
Must never dew the thirsting earth
With tears of his. O, brute decree!
So must I steel the heart of me
And never let a salt drop fall —
I dare not think of him at all!

I dare not think about the last
Big hug he gave me — dare not cast

My mind's eye back to him, or hear
His vibrant voice close by my ear:
"See, Daddy, I still got my dollar —
There, now, I all smeared up your collar!"
None of these things dare I recall —
I never think of him at all!

WHY WE DO SO

WE talk to them when they're asleep —
These tiny objects of our love!
We murmur to them while we weep
And call them each our treasure trove.

We talk to them when they're asleep —
Oh, wayward children that they are! —
And hope that always we may keep
Their feet from straying into far

And thorn-girt paths beset with sin —
That they may never, never reap
Such harvesting as ours has been —
We talk to them when they're asleep.

Now do not bust right out and weep,
Or let your cheeks with teardrops glisten;
We talk to them when they're asleep
'Cause that's the only time they'll listen.

"JUST FINE"

IF you ask her how she feels —
"Just fine!"
Ask about her new cook's meals —
"Just fine!"
Ask her how she liked the show
Into which you saw her go;
Ask her how her house plants grow —
"Just fine!"

Ask her anything you wish —
"Just fine!"
How she likes her chafing dish —
"Just fine!"
Ask her how the country'll do
With its lessened revenue.
She will simply glow at you —
"Just fine!"

"Rather tiresome?" did you say —
"Just fine!"
Hate to hear it day on day —
"Just fine!"
But that bromide with a smile
Has folks beat about a mile
Who, in answering, all the while
Just whine!

FUNNY, ain't it? When th' children of a neighborhood is fed
On the very same variety of grub,
That some of them is yeller gold an' some of 'em is lead —
Th' difference 'twixt th' thoroughbred an' scrub?
Thought o' that th' other evenin' when 'twas gradjyatin' time
At th' high-school down to Abernathy's Cove —
When I see my girl amongst 'em — gosh, th' contrast wuz a crime! —
Like a volunteer petooney growin' in a jimson grove.

All th' dresses was as white as hers — I reckon, purty nigh —
All th' ribbons wore wuz either pink 'er blue;
All th' posies that they carried growed beneath our country sky,
An' they might of looked about as good to you.
But th' laws-a-mercy on us! When her ma an' me set there
A wipin' tears an' sniffin' an' a-lookin' at that batch,
Th' others wuzn't no place — our Melissey, on th' square,
Seemed a volunteer petooney bloomin' in a ragweed patch!

Then sez I, it can't be, really; so I turned an' ast M'ri!
(She's my woman, an' th' mother of th' girl)
If th' wuz so much of difference, exceptin' in my eye.
An' y' orto seen th' woman give a whirl
An' snicker at me, scornful, as she says: "I reckon SO!
Them there eugenic fellers says that they's difference in breeds.
An' any one with half a eye can't scarcely help but know
A volunteer petooney 'mongst a garden full o' weeds!"

THE SONGS OF MEN

A WAIL and a song are the sounds of men;
They tell of joy, of sorrow.
The wail may rule for a day, but then
The song must rule the morrow.
And this you will find, 'mid the lilt or croak
From the throngs that toil or shirk:
The wailings come from the idle folk,
And the songs from those who work.

For the busiest aye are the happiest —
'Tis the sloths have time to grumble.
The toiler goes to his work with zest —
It keeps him sweet and humble.
But the idle one aye is the malcontent
And his whole horizon's murk —
The song comes up from the life toil-blent,
And the wail from those who shirk.

"In the sweat of thy brow"— He knew us well
Who made us in His image.
"He knoweth our frame," so the Scriptures tell,
And the normal life's a scrimmage.
So list to the song of the toilers brave
Whose souls keep sweet through work;
And close your ears to the mournful stave
Of the wailers who only shirk.

SHE HAS HER POINTS

BEHOLD the old, pot-bellied mare
Who stands beside the stack.
She is not stream-lined anywhere;
She has a sagging back.
The hair is worn from off her sides
Where tug and trace have been;
Profound disgust with life abides
About that pendant chin.

Her draggled fetlocks reek with mud,
Her tail is full of burs;
No pride of race or purple blood
Or Blue-grass sires is hers.
Her sturdy pasterns, chaff-bestrewn,
Have blemishes galore;
Through straw-filled mane the breezes croon,
Each shoulder bears a sore.

But she has never cast a tire;
Her starter always works;
Her spark-plugs never fail to fire;
Her timer never shirks;
Her oil-gauge plunger never sticks;
And ne'er has she, I ween,
Five miles from home, or maybe six,
Run out of gasolene!

WHEN SATAN WAS PUZZLED

OLD Satan looked the victim o'er and sat him down and wept.
He knew his limitations just as anybody does.
He looked along the shelves where all his torture books were kept;
He called his imps to conference, and held a lengthy buzz
With all his chief advisers, but they couldn't help a bit.
They couldn't find a recipe, a codicil or clause
Providing for a fate so bad it should be used to fit
The case of him who'd told his child there was no Santa Claus.

Said Satan, in between his sobs, "I've had some toughs before —
I've had the man who whipped his wife, the man who robbed a church,
I've had the one who sold the mine filled up with salted ore,
But here's a guy who leaves the others sadly in the lurch.
I've not a room that's hot enough, no pincers that will serve
To gouge this geezer hard enough, though held by strongest paws —
This king of worldly misanthropes who had the boundless nerve

To tell his little children: 'No, there is no Santa Claus.'"

So Satan wept and wept again and wrung his calloused hands,
He had a downright tantrum in his ecstasy of grief.
He said, "I've fixed the worst of them from all the climes and lands,
But what to do with this gazabe, of meanest men the chief?"
At length he smiled and showed the man (by his Satanic magic)
The thought his sons should have of him — he gave a frenzied scream!
Then Satan smiled in keener glee — he'd found a finish tragic
For him who'd ruined ruthlessly his children's sweetest dream.

ALL OF US

KIDS in a cornfield, waving at the train
That scurries by on its mysterious way
To lands as distant as the Spanish Main
Seemed to us in our own untraveled day.
Barefooted, overalled, sunbonneted,
Hoe in the hollow of an arm, they wave
At this fleet vision — coming now, now fled —
A ride on that? No finer boon they crave.

Kids in a cornfield, waving at the train,
While we inside are envious as they —
We envying them the care-free heart and brain
That need but dream and wonder all the day;
We wishing that the trips we needs must make
Were gorgeous as our cornfield vision seemed
Before we gambled for life's larger stake —
While yet behind the scenes we grandly dreamed.

Life is a train at which we children wave —
We friendly ones: some merely sulk and frown —
Load and unload at cradle and at grave;
Speeding for one, then gently slowing down
To drop some passenger whose journey's done.
We hope to be caught up and carried hence
To wider vistas, past the setting sun —
No traveler's tale has e'er been wafted thence!

And we who wave in friendliness may hope
To be caught up and carried far and far
To bigger things, while they who stand and mope
In bitterness, beside the fleeting car,
Fast-anchored by their sullenness, remain
Within the cornfield all their livelong day.
Then let us wondering children greet life's train
And for life's finer, broader vision pray.

A MIDDLE-AGE REFLECTION

I SAW a chap the other day that once I'd used to know.
His cheeks were rosy, hair jet black, in days of long ago.
But now the roses are not there, the raven hair is streaked
With snowy white where ruthless Time his grim revenge has wreaked.
I marveled. For the heart of me is young as when I knew
The fellow years and years ago 'neath skies of youth's own blue.
And then I chanced to recollect, and heard my own voice say:
"What has been happening to me, while he was turning gray?"

Day after day I'd seen myself reflected in the glass —
The change had been so gradual my eyes had let it pass
Unnoticed. Had I failed to see myself for such a span
As had elapsed since I had met this other aging man,
No doubt the contrast would have been as great. I had been used
To thinking of myself as still with wine of youth infused.

Perhaps the same was in his mind when we two
met that day:
"What has been happening to me while he was
turning gray?"

But young at heart — God keep us that! Let care
be laughed to scorn.
Let's keep our backs to eventide and always face
the morn.
Let's keep the ripeness of our noon to guide the
girls and boys
Whose youth is callower than ours and lacking
deeper joys.
The snow of age may dust our hair, it can not reach
within.
We'll teach those careworn youths of ours to bear
their griefs and grin —
Go to the one whose empty life has palled on him,
and say:
"A wiser youth has come to me while you were
turning gray!"

WHEN THE KIDS ARE AWAY

EVERY Sunday of my lifetime, when the children are at home,
I must get the "funny papers"— just as many as I can —
And proceed to read them thoroughly — go through them with a comb
And extract their every giggle, from Beersheba plumb to Dan.
And they tickle me — yes, honest! — quite as well as any one.
I just hurt my sides a-laughing at each bit of equine play.
But I read them over sadly — cannot find a stitch of fun
In the whole disgusting medley, when the children are away.

Do I care? Am I repentant that I've had so little sense
As to gurgle o'er the follies of the "funny paper" folks?
Am I making resolutions that no more these frothings dense
Shall arouse my cachinnations — that I'll stick to subtler jokes?
No. Instead I'm always wishing that the kids were back again
So there'd be more fun in living; so I'd cackle like a jay

Over all the loutish capers of the "funny paper" men
That somehow lose all their tickle when the children are away.

THE "UNBELIEVERS"

I'VE been around with lots o' ginks
Of that ludicrous class that thinks it thinks;
And I've heard 'em boast of "unbelief,"
Expectin' to see me bust with grief.
But I only grin, for I full well know
They mean no more than the winds that blow.
Let somethin' occur to disturb their mind,
And you'll see they've faith of the old-time kind.

One time I was brakin' (the job ahead)
On th' engine run by Penuckle Red
With Hardnut Bates on th' left-hand side
When he wasn't shovelin'— nasty ride!
For them two geezers set an' cussed —
Till sudden a wore-out side-rod bust.
An' both them fellers believed in God
Till they knowed they was missed by that slashin' rod.

An' there was Johnny Trevelyan — him
That used t' flag with Crazy Jim;
Jest th' out-an'-outerest cuss t' swear
That they weren't no God, not anywhere.
An' he'd prove it, too, by a process slick.
An' he kep' this up till his kid got sick.
Then Johnny prayed — an' his prayin' was swell! —
Till th' baby started a-gettin' well.

I've seen 'em often that thought they thought
An' laid to " natur' " what God had wrought.
An' I've seen 'em eat it when danger come
An' their chance for life seemed on th' bum.
Belief in somethin' higher up
Comes nat'ral 's barkin' does to a pup.
Th' " unbelief " of th' kind I've heerd
Jest lasts till th' guy gits good an' skeered.

THE FUN OF LIVING

"HAVEN'T we had fun today?"
Thus my youngster, tired of play,
Gurgles to me every night
Just before his eyes go tight
Shut in restful, dreamless sleep —
Baby slumber sound and deep.

"Haven't we had fun today?"
One of us is sure to say
At his bedtime. For his dad
Is no older than the lad —
Counting by the way he feels
When the two kick up their heels.

"Haven't we had fun today?"
As the years grow later, may
Neither of us e'er deny
Such assertion, with a sigh.
May the bigger things of life
Seem a game, with cheerful strife.

"Haven't we had fun today?"
When God bids me go away
From this world we so enjoy,
May I hear him — still "my boy"—
Laugh his au revoir, and say
"Haven't we had fun today?"

SOMETHING SWEET TO REMEMBER

NO matter if things of the present are less than
we wish them to be;
No matter if joys we'd expected pass by on the
other side;
No matter if hope's finest fruitage still clings to the
wishing tree,
No matter if some of our dreamings have lin-
gered awhile and died.
Even lacking these satisfactions, life is far from
a pleasureless thing —
If we've something that's sweet to remember, we
can bravely and blithesomely sing.

There was once — howe'er joyless your present —
when you thrilled with the love of life;
You have lived through some perfect moments
when your darlingest wish was fulfilled;
There have been little seasons of triumph, when
your banner rode over the strife,
When, just as if Fate were your servant, things
came as you'd stubbornly willed.
So now, though your colors be trailing, though some
other's joy-flag is afling,
If you've something that's sweet to remember,
you may live in that mem'ry, and sing!

PUT TO THE TEST

THE friends you've lost by frankness were a
craven sort at best;
They never were the kind you'd want when trouble
was your lot.
They were but latent enemies in garb of friendship
dressed —
The sooner you were shed of them the better, like
as not.
So though it hold the bitterness of wormwood
mixed with gall,
The friends you lose through frankness aren't your
real friends, at all!

The friend who knows you as you are, to whom you
never need
To give an explanation for your most eccentric act,
He is the only kind to have — a friend in very
deed!
The qualities this good friend has, the "friend"
you're mourning lacked.
So doff the sable weeds you wear and whistle some-
thing gay —
The friend you've lost through frankness would
have failed you anyway.

GAUNT; solemn; lines of sorrow in his face;
Deep, melancholy eyes where dwelt the grief
Of all mankind — already you can trace
The old, familiar formula, in brief,
We follow when we singers would depict
The greatest, strangest, sweetest soul since He
Of Nazareth fulfilled divine edict
And walked the earth for wond'ring men to see.

But in our groping we completely miss
The point of what we'd make our words express.
There may be words in other worlds than this
To reach the subtle core of things, and dress
Our finest feelings in some lingual garb
Conveyable to other ears than ours —
Grief of the Christ whose side receives the barb;
Or sweet, soul-thrilling fragrance of the flowers.

When comes the anniversary of him
Whose name we love, whose mem'ry we revere,
We still attempt, in language vague and dim,
To voice a feeling deep, and strong and clear —
Using the hackneyed phrases o'er and o'er
As oft as comes our idol's natal day;
Missing each time, as we have missed before,
The soul of that we'd give our souls to say.

THE HARDENING PROCESS

HE went without underwear half of his life,
Just to harden himself.
He boasted — sometimes came a boast from his wife —
How he hardened himself.
No overcoat ever was seen on his form,
And yet he contended he always was warm —
He feared not the blizzard, he feared not the storm.
He had hardened himself.

He slept in a tent, with mosquito bar sheets —
Just to harden himself;
Slept out through the snows and slept out through the sleets,
Just to harden himself.
He wouldn't have slept in a house — mercy, no!
Such coddling as that brought humanity woe;
E'en when it was twenty or thirty below
He would harden himself.

One night the thermometer dropped like a shot
While he hardened himself.
It broke all the records, so chilly it got,
While he hardened himself.
Next morning he didn't come out of his tent
And when to awake him his gentle wife went,

She found him — froze stiff! He just couldn't be
bent!
He had hardened himself —
At last,
Really hardened himself.

WHAT OF YOUR FIGHT?

WAS your weight behind the blow?
Do you positively know
Not another ounce of power could have gone into your punch?
Left you any stone unturned,
Any rearward bridge unburned —
Did you stake your last simoleon to justify your hunch?

In the effort that you made
Was your utmost strength displayed?
Did you mutter: "If 'tis in me to get by with it, here goes!"
Did you say, "I'll pay the price
Now, to save the time of twice"—
Did you hit out from the shoulder, leaning forward from your toes?

Did you try, or think you tried?
Did you bore in, savage-eyed,
Till your foeman's solar-plexus or the apex of his jaw
Was unguarded? Did you land
With a wallop in each hand?
Should the fight have been a knockout, 'stead of stopping with a draw?

Know, when every fight is done —.
Be the vict'ry lost or won —,

There was not a drop of fighting lying idle in your
breast.
Even bruises and defeat
Have their modicum of sweet
When you know that in the battle you have done
your level best.

A FACIAL STUDY

HE stood on the street — a wretched thing of
tatters, rags and bloat.
He had no pockets for his hands, so he wrapped
them in his coat —
His threadbare, wind-whipped, faded coat that did
not keep him warm
Beside the slender post that stood between him
and the storm.
And while dejected thus he loafed and shivered in
the gale,
A counterpart of him came by, making a zigzag
trail.
As the staggerer passed the sober tramp I caught
the latter's eye —
The envious look of a sober bum when a
drunken bum went by.

An envious look? Yes, that was there, but vastly
more beside.
I saw a look of shame contort that visage bleary-
eyed.
'Twas such a look as plainly said: "A counter-
part of me!
My drunken self as I appear, with all the world
to see!
We're both among the down-and-outs — no use to
try again
To take a high or honored place among the
ranks of men!"

All this with envy was combined — I thought I
heard a sigh
From the wretched, ragged, sober bum as the
drunken bum went by.

And I thought I noticed a strong disgust and
maybe a gleam of hope
In the sober one's face as he watched his friend
in his aimless weave and grope.
I thought I saw a feeble, faintly flickering flash
of life
From the burned-out fires that once had driven
his soul's ambitious strife.
But perchance I erred, and perhaps the hope that
I half believed I saw
Was a fantasy born of the prayer I made as I
gazed at the loose-hung jaw,
The mottled cheek and the stubbly chin, the
blurred and blearing eye —
That look on the face of the sober bum when
the drunken bum went by.

JUST NOTHIN'

SITTIN' all lopped over with yer eyes half shut,
Watchin' somethin' movin' in the field out there;
Somethin' sorto movin' by that old, gray hut —
Dunno if it's paper or a hen — don't care!

Watchin' somethin' movin'— all yer mind asleep
'Cept enough t' wonder what the deuce that is —
Wouldn't move a muscle t' find out — just keep
Wonderin' continyus — it's such easy biz!

Sittin' at the depot on a rusty truck,
Shadder of yer suitcase movin' faster than yer mind!
View so less-than-nothin' you believe you'd be in luck
If, until your train come, you was temporary blind.

Man off in a fodderfield — you see 'is overalls
Bluer than th' gray-blue sky; his black an' sorrel team
Movin' on from shock to shock — small enough fer dolls!
Afterward you wonder if you seen 'em in a dream.

Two folks come a-walkin' from th' main street o' the town —
Hear th' bus a-rumblin' like th' distant roll o' drums!

Somethin' creaks; y' see th' target-paddle droppin' down,
Bus man hikes 'is pants an' spits an' grunts out, "Hyer she comes."

Waitin' fer a railroad train at little dumps like that
Is just th' nearest zero you can find below th' sky.
Wish I had a dollar fer each hour I have sat —
"Killin' time?" I gosh, it's just a-lettin' of her die!

THE TRIFLINGEST JOB

I'VE seen men work at everything that's piffling,
seems to me,
From pounding sand in ratholes down to playing
auction bridge;
I've seen men spend a half a day at lining up a bee
That flew from clovered valley to the woods be-
yond the ridge.
But the job that's always proved to be the trifling-
est of all;
That has brought the least returns and made the
failure most complete,
Was backing up a gang of ginks against a sunny
wall
And telling "funny" stories at the corner of the
street.

I've seen folks play at mumbly-peg and horseshoe
pitching, too.
I've seen 'em stand for hours watching some one
climb a pole;
I've seen 'em lamp safe-movers while they eased
their burden through
A window; watched 'em watching down a ragged
gas ditch hole.
Now as trifling as these capers, they're important
in compare
With the other job I mention — sure forerunner
of defeat:

Lining up a bunch of loafers in the balmy, springy
air,
And telling "funny" stories at the corner of the
street.

I'll bet a pewter nickel with a hole in it, that when
These wasters come to judgment with the others,
by and by,
When hotel-rocker-warmers and the other sons of
men
Who killed their time most foolishly, have strag-
gled to the sky —
I'll bet a pint of cookies that the one who'll fare
the worst
When, standing at the threshold, he is questioned
by Saint Pete,
Will be the one referred to as the chief of the
accurst —
The one whose "funny" stories smirched the cor-
ner of the street.

BECOMING A MAN

I USED to think, when I was small, that all I need to do
To be a man, was just grow up. That was before I knew
So much of grown-up males who lack as much that manhood needs
As when they were but juveniles and dreamed of manly deeds.
So I have learned this much, at least, since when my life began:
It takes much more than growing up to be a real man.

"When I grow up and be a man," you hear the small boys say,
As if by merely growing large they should be men some day.
But, knowing manhood's requisites in larger sense, they'll learn
There's much besides their body growth for which they ought to yearn.
The stately St. Bernard is more than just a larger pup —
It takes much more to be a man, than just a-growing up!

Fine breadth of vision, self-control, a boundless charity,
A gentler tongue, a stronger faith, more perfect clarity

In spirit-vision; patience vast — more patience
still, and more;
Wisdom to know — and to forget — all that has
gone before;
Courage to smile though sorrow fill unto its brim
your cup —
More is required, to make a man, than merely
growing up!

THE HIDDEN PLAYMATES

THE old man went where the boys had been
That he used to play with, long ago;
To the white schoolhouse they had studied in,
With the church and the graveyard down below.
As he stood alone with his white head bowed,
The years slipped off from his mind and soul
And he lifted his voice to call aloud
His one-time mates' familiar roll:

"Tom!" Never an answer but echo came.
"Bill!" Cows in a nearby field looked up.
"George," "Philip," "Ben"—it was still the same;
And grief drops welled in the old man's cup.
"They are hiding from me, those rascals are,
As they used to hide in the days gone by,
When 'books' let out, and near and far
We romped and ran as we played 'I spy.'

"But there was a rule that it wasn't fair
To hide in the graveyard, near the church.
And once — when we told! — when Ben hid there,
The teacher taught him the feel of birch.
'You mustn't play where they've laid their dead,'
She cautioned him and the other boys.
'It's wicked to hide 'mid the mounds,' she said,
'With your clumsy feet and your thoughtless noise.'

"I am sure they have broken that rule today
As I call and never an answer comes.
But none will chide them or say them nay —
Those mischievous lads who were once my chums.
Sometime, when I've called to the boys again
And listened in vain for their shrilled reply,
I'll brave the teacher, like wayward Ben,
And hide myself 'mid the mounds near by."

HE drove a motor car that looked just like a plumbing-shop.
It had nine hundred ways to run and nary way to stop,
And when he cut the muffler out and started to warm up
It sounded like a shootfest in the factory of Krupp.
He had a hairpin turn to make — did he shut off the power?
Not quite! He took that awful swerve at ninety miles an hour.
A tire came off — they gathered up a full square inch of skin
Beneath the hideous devil-cart where this poor chap had been.
And that is "sport!"

He sat within a dirty boat upon a fishless stream;
He threw his high-priced bait far out where flashed the ripple's gleam.
The sun came by and cooked his back, the black ants chewed his flesh,
The huge mosquitoes pierced his shirt at every blessed mesh.
He had been told — and truthfully — that not a fish existed
Within a dozen miles of there; but still the chap persisted

Until he ached in every bone and reeked at every pore,
Then wretchedly he plodded back to his camp-cabin door.
And that is "sport!"

He took a gun and tramped all day o'er forest brake and fen
(Whatever both those places are) far from the haunts of men.
He didn't have a bite to eat that he'd have touched at home.
At night he lay on bony boughs beneath the star-gemmed dome;
While woodticks bit him to the quick and sleepless hoot owls sang
Till he and his companions were a cross and nervous gang.
Next day they faced the constant fear that each might shoot the other,
And henceforth bear the brand of Cain as one who'd killed a brother.
And that is "sport!"

THE GENERAL STORE

I'D know it by the sight of it, I'd know it by the smell;
I'd know it by the sound of it, and know it mighty well.
I'd know it if you set me down at midnight, 'mid the scent
Of coffee, "coal oil," sugar bins and country butter blent.
With eyes shut, I can smell again the prints upon the shelf
Amid the hickory shirting — you could do the same yourself
If you had lived among them in the days when life was bleak
And all you saw was in the town — say every other week.

On that side is the candy — I can see it now, and, oh,
How good those striped sticks used to look in days of long ago!
On this side is the muslin with blue trade marks printed on,
The bleached and unbleached side by side; and here's some slazy lawn
And dimity that wouldn't sell (they'd bought it by mistake);
Some blacking, fans and currycombs, with hoe and garden rake.

We used to carry in the eggs and butter, and we'd
buy
Our sugar, tea and bluing and the concentrated
lye.

We used to wander back into the small room where
they kept
The kerosene and axle grease —'twas hardly ever
swept;
But there it was we found the scales and weighed
ourselves and said
It wasn't like the steelyards out in our old wagon
shed.
'Twas there that in the springtime pa would buy
us all straw hats,
The ten-cent kind made out of straw they use for
making mats.
In fall we got our foot gear that must last the
winter through,
For pa said: "Them's yer winter boots — ye've
got t' make 'em do."

I've been in houses mercantile that covered blocks
and blocks;
I've seen the clerks that swarm around in bevies
and in flocks;
I've seen the elevators; but I cannot make it seem
Like anything substantial, for 'tis nothing but a
dream.

To me the real "store" will be, as long as life
shall last,
That smelly country village place I knew there
in the past,
With just one clerk to sell you things — some fel-
low that you knew,
Though sometimes on a circus day there'd be as
high as two.
No fun to "do th' tradin'" like I used to, any
more —
How clear is memory's picture of that "gen'ral"
country store!

THE ETERNAL BEGINNING

THIS morning is the time when I begin.
No former life has ever entered in
To dull me. I have had my nightly rest —
Sufficient; I will play it was the best.
I start unhandicapped by old-time fears,
Unapprehensive of the pregnant years
Still in the future. But with face serene
I go my way — night wiped the old slate clean.

This morning will I love the mate I chose
Once on a time — the trouble that arose,
So long ago as yesterday, is dead.
Nor, martyr-like, upon her patient head
Will I heap coals of fire — and renew
The bickering that the kindly night withdrew.
It is as though we met and loved afresh,
As ere God made us one in name and flesh.

The humbled spirit that was mine last night
Gave place to one triumphant ere the light.
The bitter knowledge of my own defects
Yields to a braver spirit that directs
Myself and, by and large, my destiny —
No timorous, fear-born phantom threatens me.
The past, a signed report, has been turned in:
This morning is the time when I Begin.

UNPARDONABLE

THERE is pardon for failure to reach just the mark
You'd set for yourself in the struggle of life.
There's forgiveness for him who, through lacking the spark
Of genius, is "downed" in the thick of the strife.
There is balm for the pride of the fellow who fails
To attain what he wished when his struggle began.
But the world will be deaf to the babyish wails
Of the man who does less than the best that he can.

The world's fairly just in accrediting praise
And fairly judicious in placing the blame.
Its eye's fairly clear in observing the plays
In front of the grand stand in life's busy game.
The runner who's spiked is forgiven his limp,
And nobody kicks o'er the pace that he ran.
But the hoot and the jeer for the white-livered imp
Who does any less than the best that he can.

When we finish our season and pennants are won,
We'll be judged not so much by our batting per cent.
As by what, with more effort, we ought to have done;
By the time we have wasted on indolence bent.

There'll be less of "What did you?" than "What could have been?"
In the light of equipment your work they will scan.
They'll forgive you for failing the pennant to win,
But never for less-than-the-best-that-you-can.

THE EASIER TASK

NO matter what the treatment he accord me,
I will not let dislike embitter me;
Whate'er unrest unkindness might afford me,
I will keep sweet, however hard it be.
For I have learned — and oh, how slow the learning,
And with what costly grief has it been mated! —
Hate in its author's heart has fiercest burning —
'Tis harder work to hate than to be hated.

Year after year a man may hate his brother —
Each waking hour with bitterness be filled.
This hate may bring discomfort to the other —
But, in the hater, joy is well-nigh killed.
And so I will not harbor hate, nor hoard it —
I've learned my lesson, though perchance belated.
The honest truth is this: I can't afford it;
'Tis costlier to hate than to be hated.

SONG OF THE FAMILY MAN

I'LL stick around. The Good Book says that I
Must flock with angels in the by and by.
And if the angels look like what I've seen
So labeled in each book and magazine
That spoke of them, I'd rather have my folks
Than any of those semi-feathered mokes.

I'll stick around. My people know my faults
And make allowance. When my spirit vaults
Into the blue and starts to circulate
Among the flying brand of vertebrate
That know me not and can not sin themselves,
I'll wish me back upon the gray stone shelves
Inside the mausoleum, or with those
Who used to know me in my working clothes.

I'll stick around. That is, if angels seem
Like those oft pictured from the artist's dream.
I can not say I gladly look ahead
To changing company when I am dead.
God is as good as I could wish Him, when
He sends me home to wife and kids again.

"THERE never was a trouble yet," I've heard my mother say,
"That wasn't mentioned in this Book I study every day.
There never was a crisis in a human life, I'm sure,
But had its prototype in this — the Book that must endure."

She doesn't say things to me now — that mother wise of mine —
At least not with the sort of voice she did. But clear and fine
I hear her admonitions just as plainly now as when
She read to me the same old things, again and yet again.

I didn't know it sank so deep — the wisdom she imparted.
It took the years — relentless years that left me heavier-hearted —
To show me how her words and voice I thought I — slightly heeded
Were stored to give my later life the things it sorely needed.

And now when, in a hotel room, I take the little Book
The Gideons — God bless them! — gave, I reverently look

Through page on page and find therein, to my profound surprise,
Full proof, through this great wonder Book, that God's all-seeing eyes

Foresaw that day — that very day that was so new to me,
And had discoursed, through minds inspired, on all that I should be
And do, throughout the crisis that had seemed to me unique!
How marvelously down the years those wondrous pages speak!

And, strangely, things I read in there sound different, somehow,
From ordinary printed stuff. And hence my little vow
That I, both for my mother's sake, and for my own sake too,
Will search the Scriptures every day — they tell me what to do!

THE EXCEPTION

WHEN the world is bright and sunny and he's
feeling blithe and gay,
He's his daddy's constant shadow from the dawn
till closing day.
When his face is wreathed with dimples and his
heart is singing loud
Why, his father is a monarch with immortal traits
endowed.
Not another human creature is essential to his
joy —
He will tell you any moment that he's "Favver's
only boy."
But 'tis quite another story when there's sorrow
with the lad,
For he always wants his mother when he's sick or
when he's bad!

Father's good enough in sunshine; but the coming
of the storm
Brings a hunger for the hugging that is gentle,
soft and warm;
Brings a need for tender croonings and the sooth-
ing "Never minds"
That, excepting in a mother's arms, no human
ever finds.
So he turns his back on father — can not see him
for a minute
When his over-arching baby sky has clouds of
trouble in it.

When the birds are singing sweetly he's forever
tagging dad,
But he always wants his mother when he's sick or
when he's bad.

YOU ask me: "Are the journeys hard?"
And "Does the time seem long?"
You marvel that, though travel-worn, I lift my voice in song.
The waits are weary, food ill-cooked, the beds give fitful rest.
Yet do I bear it cheerfully and labor on with zest.
You wonder why — I'll tell you, friend, how such a thing may be:
I have a love that comes between my selfish self and me.

My own discomfort grieves me not while letters from my flock
Proclaim their vital welfare. I can bear each brunt and shock
With fortitude and laughter if the ones I leave at home
Are well in mind and body while their guardian's a-roam.
Their joy is vastly dearer than my own can ever be —
That love's so close it lies between my inmost self and me.

God pity him who has himself alone to fret about!
With nothing sweet between him and the cares that flail and flout.

His room is cold, his food is bad, his train is cruel late —
He stands the gaff unarmored and bewails his bitter fate.
But I, if all go well at home, am happy as can be,
And thank the Lord for love that lies between myself and me.

"AND SHUT THY DOOR"

"But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet and shut thy door."— Bible.

"AND shut thy door!" How well He knew
This human being He had made!
When day's long hours have harried you
At home or in the marts of trade,
How exquisite your spirit's thirst
To be aloof a little while
From that which frets and vexes worst —
The constant need to beck and smile.

You are alone within your room;
And yet your spirit craves still more
Assurance that no soul may loom
O'er your horizon —"shut thy door."
The sound of turning round the key
Within the lock — the balm it gives!
The current of your thoughts flows free,
Till soon again your best self lives.

This person and that other drew
Some vital part of you away —
They pulled and hauled and tortured you
Through all the busy, patient day.
This shut-in hour with none but God
(Who ne'er intrudes) will soon restore
Your feet to paths in calmness trod:
Enter your room "and shut thy door."

IS IT LONG?

"IN two more days I shall be home again,"
I told my wide-eyed baby boy. And then
Swift, sob-choked came his question: "Is that
long?"
I held him in my arms that love made strong
And soothed: "To you, but not to me, my son —
It will seem short to you when it is done."

I beg to know whence comes the rose's flame.
He whom we worldlings variously name
Has promised me that, when this life is o'er,
To me He will reveal all hidden lore —
The alchemy of blossom, leaf and tree
And every other baffling mystery.

My fretting magnifies the long delay
Before the dawning of my wiser day.
I voice the burden of that baby song,
Pleading, impatient, "Father, is it long?"
"To you," He smiles, "but not to me, my son —
'Twill seem full short to you, when life is done."

A HUMAN HUNGER

I WANTA dream o' floatin' on a big, pink cloud
With fiddles singin' sleepy an' a flute a-playin' loud,
An' a pianner played so soft you sometimes think she's quit —
Then you would whisper to yourself, "Why, no! She's playin' yit!"

I wanta dream my body's well, my whole self feelin' good —
Jest everything the good Lord give me, workin' as it should;
An' dream o' floatin' high an' high without no skeer at tall,
A-thinkin' what a joke it was that once I feared I'd fall.

I wanta dream o' lazy shine an' wind caressin' so
Y' couldn't even wonder if it's warm enough er no.
An' most I'd dream of some one feelin' just th' same as me
A-holt my hand an' pressin' jest as gentle as can be —

Some one that never has to say a single tender word
But says it always — always, jest as plain as singin' bird.

I'd lose what trouble's in my heart an' all there
ever was —
Lord, how I long for happiness, like everybody
does!

"FORGIVE ME"

WOULDN'T it be good, my brother,
If the sun could always shine?
If we lived for one another,
Wouldn't every day be fine?
Life were sweeter still, believe me,
Freer far from wails of woe
If those simple words "Forgive me"
Didn't choke a fellow so.

Were our lips not schooled to smother
All that's finest in the heart,
Wouldn't it be easy, brother,
Aye to choose the better part?
Oh, this world were sweet, believe me,
Free from bitterness and woe
If those blessed words "Forgive me"
Didn't choke a fellow so.

THE HUSBAND'S INQUISITION

WHAT have I borne of her sorrows?
What of my pleasures shared?
Yesterday, now and tomorrow —
Long as my life is spared,
These are the questions I ask me,
Oft as I think of her;
Always with this I task me,
Often with eyes a-blur.

First in my mind up-springing,
When in the night I wake,
Last through my heart-thoughts winging,
As restward my way I take;
Always the self-same question,
Ever the wistful note —
Aye at its mere suggestion,
Something obstructs my throat.

Never a need of saying,
"What has she done for me?"
God — may He heed my praying —
Knows what a treasure she.
This — only this I'm asking,
What have I done for her?
Always my soul thus tasking —
Often with eyes a-blur.

TO A BABY GIRL

A LAMB born to a world of wolves that howl
Upon your trail; that snarl and drool and growl
To capture you and gorge themselves afresh
Upon your soft, love-consecrated flesh.
A blossom blown for trampling under feet
Of vandals who desire your soul's defeat.
Ours till, by winds of Time and Trouble hurled,
You are fed, living, to man's ravening world.

Kneeling or standing, all our parent life
Is one blood-sweating prayer that in the strife
Confronting you, the odds for right may win;
That when the struggle ends you may have been
Loved always with the tenderness that now
We give, chaste as a sacerdotal vow.
But oh, the fires that rage along your path
Where you must dare your fellow beings' wrath!

Your beauty that provokes the prideful tear
In doting parent eyes, will bring the leer
Of fawning brutes that slaver for your life —
O knowledge that goes leaping like a knife
To all our finest feelings! While you may,
Cling to the ones that love you so that they
Would gladly die — that you be undefiled —
God keep you safe, O tender woman-child!

THOSE NIGHTS OF BROKEN SLEEP

WE used to worry for our children's sakes —
Because young Jim would carry garter snakes
In his pants pockets, and because Jemime
Would take the stairway two steps at a time.

Many a night we've lain awake and fretted
Because our Angelina, spoiled and petted,
Threw oft her little milk cup to the floor;
We lie awake and fret o'er these no more.

For Jim is thirty-eight and doesn't lug
In any pocket snake or worm or bug;
Jemime was thirty-five last June, and weighs
Two hundred — does she skip the steps these days?

While Angelina, thirty-two or so,
Ceased, decades since, her little cup to throw
Upon the floor —— Wish we had back the sleep
We missed when o'er their faults we used to weep!

THIS DAY

THIS is bound to be — well, say! —
One humdinger of a day!
It may rain, but what's the diff?
What would happen to us if
It should fail to rain and then
Clear up, cloud and rain again?
Whatsoe'er the weather be,
This will prove, for you and me
(As I started out to say),
One dicknailer of a day.

Ere the night comes you will get
Hungry, and some meals, I'll bet;
You'll be thirsty, so I think,
And relieve that thirst with drink;
You will have a chance to do
Favors for some one whom you
Long have known and owed a kindness;
You are free from deafness, blindness,
Or, if not, you feel! Oh, say!
This will be a corking day.

What I mean to say is this:
Every day has some of bliss.
Just endure with patient smile
Things that hurt. For after while
There will come the happiness
That shall lighten your distress —

Lighten it? Nay, 'twill destroy it.
Life will change and you'll enjoy it.
Every morning, just you say:
"This will be one bully day!"

"ARE YOU THERE?"

I LIKE to play close by my father's den,
Where he's at work, and every now and then
Ask: "Father, are you there?" He answers back:
"Yes, son." That time I broke my railroad track
All into bits, he stopped his work and came
And wiped my tears, and said: "Boy, boy! Be game!"
And then he showed me how to fix it right,
And I took both my arms and hugged him tight.

Once, when I'd asked him if he still was there,
He called me in and rumpled up my hair,
And said: "How much alike are you and I!
When I feel just as boys feel when they cry,
I call to our Big Father, to make sure
That He is there, my childish dread to cure.
And always, just as I to you, 'Yes, son,'
Our Father calls, and all my fret is done!"

A CONFIDENTIAL PRAYER

MY small deceptions, Lord — you know of them;
My wee prevarications, kindness-born —
I've often thought You would not quick condemn
These, in the awfulness of Judgment Morn.

Where truth can only give a thrust and sting,
Where cureless, needless hurt it must inflict,
I can not think You'll cavil till we bring
A perfect score — You will be just, not strict.

If love entice us from the beaten trail —
True love, not passion, as we read of it —
If put to test 'twixt love and truth, we fail
The center of truth's target aye to hit —

I can not think You'll hold us to account
For sacrificing self to save another
From fruitless sorrow, e'en in small amount.
Should we love most our conscience or our brother?

A GENUINE MAN

SOME days ago I met a man who'd known
The very best of life's material things —
A servant-crowded palace of his own,
Fine clothing — all that lavish fortune flings
Before the rich. And he had lost it all,
Through fault of others. Yet his head was high,
Within his spirit dwelt no trace of gall,
A smile was on his lips, his orbs were dry.

He welcomed me into his home as though
It were a grander palace — and it was!
The spirit of its tenant lent a glow
To everything, and hid whatever flaws
There may have been. Scorning apologies
He welcomed me as but the kingly can.
That night my soul got down upon its knees
And thanked its God that we had seen a Man!

A CONSOLATION

SOMETIMES the beads of perspiration stand
upon my brow
To think how little I have done from birthtime up
to now.
I feel a rimless cipher would be great beside of
me —
The depth of my dejection is a painful thing to
see.
But I cheer up quite perceptibly and lay my grief
aside
When sizing up the pinhead who has grown self-
satisfied.

My deep displeasure with myself and all that in
me is
Brings pain that's far more poignant than a case
of rheumatiz.
I see the thing I'd like to be, which also I am not,
And on humanity's fair page I rate myself a blot.
But I am just as proud as if my royal name were
Guelph
When I observe the sort of nut that's tickled with
himself.

BEWARE!

MY frau was good and healthy till the doctor saw her tongue
And placed a rubber speaking tube abaft her lee-ward lung.
Since then she's scarcely able to get up and do her work
At which she once went blithely as the (purely fabled) Turk.
She has a dozen symptoms that she didn't know she had —
Some days she's quite a little worse, and other days just bad.
I wish from out my heart of hearts she hadn't had the time
To see that blooming doctor man who turned her bones to lime.

My little girl was normal till by chance a word was dropped
In question of her eye-sight — then her happiness was stopped.
We took her to a specialist who found her lamps were mixed —
It took a week and twenty-seven bones to get her fixed.
The boy one day had sniffles, but was happy as a king —
The doctor called it adenoids and, proud as anything,

He chopped them out with tailors' shears, and now
we have to watch
The little fellow like a hawk, his throat is such a
botch.

I'm feeling well, can see a mile to read a fair-
sized print.
My hearing is as keen as keen — I've never had
a hint
Of bother with my senses — all the five are work-
ing well,
But would I see a doctor with skilled services to
sell?
Not on your latest tin-type! For he'd find I had
the pip,
Sciatic rheumatism and congenital bum hip.
And though I clearly see and hear, I bet a horse
he'd find
That I'd been deaf for seven years and for a dec-
ade blind!

THE YOUNG-OLDS

WE are the army of young-old men;
Men who have served the race,
Graying, with wrinkling face —
Served for a whole generation, and then
Started to serve through another again.
Faithful, else you should have set us adrift
Long ere this protest we earnestly lift.

We are the army of young-old men —
Likely to live a score
Or better, of good years more.
Young in our hearts as our heads were when
First we enlisted, and wiser than then —
Fitter to serve than we ever have been.
Graying of hair — is it pardonless sin?

We are the army of young-old men —
Nor pension nor alms we ask,
Only a whole man's task,
Paid what we earn — are we asking for more?
Shall we, like offal, be thrown to the floor,
Swept to the rubbish-heap — carted away
Long ere the close of our usefulest day?

LIFE'S ANESTHETIC

WHENEVER I am spirit-worn, and feel
Double the weight of years that have been mine,
I do not let my heart — the coward! — steal
Off to some mountain lake with marge of pine
And lichened cliffs. I find it sweeter far
To think of some one burdened worse than I
And write him things to keep hope's steady star
Before his care-fagged, trouble-jaundiced eye.

Ere I have written him a dozen lines
Of gentle frivol, masking sympathy,
Songs sweeter than the wind hymn in the pines
Have sung themselves into the soul of me.
For never better way has been invented
To keep lives to love's lambent lodestar true
Than helping other souls to feel contented
Till their reflected radiance shine on you.

WHAT WE PRAY FOR

WE blather 'round a lot, and ask
The Lord to tackle many a task
We don't expect to have Him tackle.
Much of such " prayer " is mere lip-cackle
And doesn't even echo, in
The heart, where all true prayers begin.

We've formed some habits in the line
Of praying. Hypocritic whine
And innocently vain pretense
We offer up — spoiled frankincense
And some adulterated myrrh —
No miracles thus asked occur.

But all the while our lips are praying,
Our far-sincerer minds are staying
Right on the job and struggling stoutly
Producing prayers we mean devoutly
Although there is no vocal word
That could by sharpest ears be heard.

The prayers we offer thus are answered —
The others never pass the mansard
On their intended upward flight
Although we yelp with all our might.
The things we do just all we may for,
And scheme and struggle day by day for —
Those are the things we really pray for.

A BABY'S SORROW

BEFORE the shining grief drop from his eye
Could course the rosy distance of his cheek,
A quick smile dug a dimple, deep and dry,
To which the hot tear turned — a briny creek —
And formed a lake with velvet shores around,
In which the baby's sorrow all was drowned.

THE "SACREDNESS" OF SOME MOTHERHOOD

SHE sat behind me in the train
The while I doped my wearied brain
With fiction up to date and rank —
Mouthings of some "eugenics" crank
Or other gouger after slime
Such as we find in this our time
When magazines, in prose or rhyme,
Run correspondence schools in crime.

She was a straight out hoi polloi,
With three girls and a baby boy,
All whom she fed on home-fried dope
From that gray canvas telescope —
Doughnuts (called "fried cakes") petrified,
With embalmed chicken on the side,
And when each child had filled his hide
He held his outraged tum and cried.

And then that sainted mother said,
While whacking Chester on the head:
"Don't yowl! 'F you holler when I hit you
That there conductor man'll git you!
Hyer, nigger man, come git this feller —
He'll cut your ears off if you beller"—
At which the poor wee, frightened yeller
Grew dumb as once was Helen Keller.

Lie after lie she told those brats:
The colored porter'd get their hats;
The brakeman'd throw them off the train
Into Missouri's mud and rain.
But pretty soon each pain-filled crier
(Bound for St. Louis and their sire —)
Got yelling like a house afire —
They'd learned that mama was a liar!

LIFE'S OTHER DIMENSIONS

WE prate about our "length of days" as
though life had but one dimension;
We dope and hope and otherwise confront death
with a fierce contention.
We seem to think that if we stretch our earth ex-
istence to its utmost,
That we have truly lived the most; that of life's
precious ice we've cut most.
But this we ought to recollect, when fighting off
death-threatening sickness:
Pay less attention to life's length, and more unto
her breadth and thickness.

Methuselah lived an awful span, counting by
month and day and second.
But I've a hunch that in the end that's not the
way our lives are reckoned.
I'm pretty sure that cubics count — that life is
more than linear measure;
That 'tis achievement, not mere time, that will be
listed as our treasure.
So it were well to keep in mind, when dodging
death with wondrous quickness,
Life holds a lot besides its length — it ought to
have some breadth and thickness.

THEN AND NOW

THE thing that once disturbed me day by day
Was having baby leave his little play
In which I thought him thoroughly absorbed,
And burst into my workroom, dewy-orbed,
To sob out all the griefs that might befall
Him in his sandpile by the garden wall.

If wealth were mine, what would I not give now,
Since time has far more deeply graved my brow,
If still he had no care he might not bring
Here to my desk, and tell me everything!

THE UNIVERSAL LESSON

MY train pours on through the night's black
sieve —
I feel her rumble and swerve and give.
Yet she clings to the rails, by laws divine
Applied by cannier hands than mine.
And she lulls me to sleep with her rhythmic flow:
"Somebody — knows something — that I — don't
know."

. . . . . .

I raise my gaze to the stars at night,
Lending through legions of leagues their light.
Amazed I murmur: "And yet I see
The meagerest marge of immensity!"
And then I whisper, with head bent low:
"Some One knows something that I don't know!"

WHEN FATHER COOKS

BETWEEN new cooks at our house,
Since mother's foot is hurt,
Our father says: "We'll have to browse
Awhile without a 'skirt.'"
He tells us how he used to cook
When camping with some guys,
And says that he could write a book
On boils and broils and fries.

Then he starts in to fix the grub,
Beginning with some bacon,
Till mother says: "My gracious, hub,
Why all this smudge you're makin'?"
He salts the oatmeal when it's done,
He burns the eggs he's frying,
And "uses butter by the ton,"
So mother says, half crying.

He starts some toast, then calls to mind
The table isn't set.
Then, smelling something, runs to find
The stuff is black as jet!
By time a meal is all prepared
Nobody's game to eat it.
Then father says: "I can't be spared
Downtown — I've got to beat it."

BEFORE — AND THEN

HE used to prove, beyond the last frail doubt,
That, when life's feeble candle had burnt out —
Taking with it the spirit we had known —
That which remained was but a clod, a stone,
Or any other soulless thing we knew —
Faultless his logic, so we deemed it true.

Years came to him, with love and all it brings —
Wife and some children. One, on angel wings,
Fled ere a year he'd nestled in the heart
Of our wise friend. Today I saw him start
Upon a little, day-long business trip —
He hid a baby's scuffed shoe in his grip.

THE VITAL ACCOMPANIMENT

THE wise admonition goes deeper, they say,
If you smile when you give it.
Your righteous life lures other feet to the Way
If you smile while you live it.
The word of good cheer finds the heart you had meant —
Sinks into the spirit to which it was sent —
Lends all of the help it was meant to have lent
If you smile when you give it.

The money you handed that brother in need —
Did you smile when you gave it?
His pride may have hurt till it made his heart bleed —
Nought but smiling could save it.
Not an impudent smirk or a meaningless grin,
Not a smile just as deep as your outermost skin —
But a love-laden smile, with sweet confidence in —
That will help him to brave it.

"NOT WORTH FOOLING WITH"

WHAT —"life is not worth fooling with?"
You're right, my lad, you're right!
Just spread that doctrine far and wide, and spread
it with your might.
Life never is worth "fooling with"— this is the
truth you're giving.
It isn't worth the "fooling with," but it's wholly
worth the living!

You say it's "not worth fooling with"— the task
assigned to you.
You're right again, impatient lad; the thing you
say is true.
Perhaps not in the sense you mean — if so, there's
trouble brewing.
Your job is not worth "fooling with," but it's
surely worth the doing!

No, tasks are not worth "fooling with"—'tis not
what tasks were made for.
You must not fool with them at all — that's not
what you are paid for.
The best that's in you, body, soul and mind, you
should be giving
To what your hands have found to do — not "fool-
ing"— toiling, living!

TO THE LOW-BROW

THE high-brow puts his pince-nez on
And looks you over pro and con,
To make sure whether he approves.
But never toward his pocket moves
His stingy hand. He gives to you
The stern once-over. When he's through
You're just as rich as when he started —
From nothing worth your while he's parted.

The low-brow takes a look and grunts:
"That gink pulls off some clever stunts.
I'll follow what he does or writes."
He keeps his promise and invites
His fellow low-brows to produce
Such current coin as they have loose,
Helping the fellow they admire
To higher levels to aspire.

I love the high-brow; his O. K.
Is worth my struggle, any day.
But what on earth would we folks do
Who have to eat a bite or two
And wear some clothing now and then
If high-brows formed the world of men?
The low-brow's knowledge may be trash,
But he backs up his smile with cash.

Then here's to the high-brow,
Who bleeds us,
God-speed us,
And leads us
To pity the freak that succeeds us.
But here's to the low-brow,
Who needs us,
And reads us,
And heeds us,
And feeds us!

A DEFI TO TROUBLE

COME, Trouble! Let me take your hat
And make you comfy by the fire.
There, in that chair where oft has sat
Your grandsire and his grandsire's sire,
Take ease. You're not the first, you see,
I've known of your poor-witted clan
That came to flout and pester me —
I am a trouble-hardened man.

You cannot bring a hurt so deep —
Unless I join my will with yours —
As to keep off my restful sleep
Behind kind night's firm-bolted doors.
You cannot bring a grief 'twill last
Through many of life's changing years —
I've known your forbears in the past
And given them all my surplus fears.

And thus — O trouble, but I'm glad
You came to-day! — always have come
Some of your tribe, with story sad,
With countenances dour and glum,
Upon the eve of blessings rich
That marked an onward step for me —
Come, rest within my ingle niche,
O harbinger of good-to-be!

A SUMMER OCCUPATION

LOOKING through the swaying tops of maples at the sky,
Watching while the fleecy clouds in phalanxes go by;
Dreaming wide-eyed visions as I stare into the blue —
Dreaming dreams far sweeter than all earthly things but you.
Resting when my soul had felt it ne'er could rest again;
Spirit goes a-soaring, myriad million miles from men —
Gazing at the leaf-splotched dome while shining clouds drift by —
Looking through the swaying tops of maples at the sky.

Underneath the maple on a comforter or two,
Peering, peering tirelessly through emerald at the blue,
Body resting prone upon the earth that bore us all —
Care and fret and heartache have departed past recall.
Downy pillow 'neath my head with fingers laced above,
Dreaming things tremendously less turbulent than love;

Sweet as love for children when in arms asleep
they lie —
Looking through the swaying tops of maples at
the sky.

When I get to heaven and my time has come to
choose
What through all the endless years my spirit shall
amuse,
I shall shun the twanging harp, the viol and the
lute,
Shun the lyre and psalter and the sweetly sobbing
flute.
'Stead of that I'll pick me out a thick-topped maple
tree,
Get a soft old pillow and a comforter and — gee!
Won't I simply revel while eternity drifts by —
Looking through the tracery of maples at the sky?

COMRADESHIP

BRAINS are infectious. When some bright soul's by
To catch your scintillations on the fly,
How quicker jumps your mind from this to that,
Your thoughts, how accurate, your words, how pat!
You have the blessed consciousness that if
By chance you should hand out a verbal biff
That struck the bull's-eye, it should not escape
And make you feel like donning mental crepe.

Like some small, timorous child whose father stands
And holds invitingly two love-strong hands
To catch him when he jumps, your mind fears not
To leap — it knows full well it will be "got."
Turn intellectual flip-flaps as you may,
The other's thought meets your bright thought half way;
Breaks every fall for you, and courage lends
To higher flights — such folk are God-made friends!

But oh, to strike a bonehead who requires
A diagram whene'er your mind aspires
To use a word from either side the rut
Our small talk runs in — to unearth a "nut"

To whom we must explain . . . ye gods, ye gods!
When one is thus beset, let's hope Jove nods!
For in one hour with such a human chasm
One's gray-stuff retrogrades to protoplasm.

WHAT VERDICT?

"I LIED to save the one I love."
How I should like to hide and hear
The verdict of the One above
When this comes to His righteous ear.

"False witness thou shalt never bear
Against thy neighbor"— yes, "against."
Search through the Scriptures everywhere
Till o'er and o'er you've recommenced

And recompleted every line
Within the sacred pages hid,
And you have better eyes than mine
If love's deceiving is forbid.

"I lied to save the one I love."
I do not say it is not sin.
I'd like to hear when He above
Brings His mistakeless verdict in.

CONCENTRATION

THIS thing I do was never done before.
There is no other place in all the earth.
There is, besides myself, no human more
That ever thanked his Maker for his birth.
I and the thing I do are everything
That is or was or will be 'neath the sun —
There is no sun across the sky a-swing,
Nor will be till this task in hand is done.

Thus, fenced off from the universe, you see
The stint, clear-eyed, unhampered by tradition;
See things as God intended them to be,
No other mind dictating your position.
Through just such means as this comes all the help
The world receives to lift it from a rut;
The State Ship's keel is cleared of clustered kelp
And doors swing wide that custom had marked
"Shut."

HIS DOLLAR

IN the pocket of his waist is a dollar, safe and sound,
Wrapped up in an envelope, with his handkerchief around.
When he's gone to bed at night and he's 'most asleep, he'll say
"Where's my dollar — are you sure it is safely put away?"
Walking with me down the street, when he stooped to tie his shoe
Out upon the pavement fell his big dollar bright and new.
But we got it back again ere it found the grimy ditch
And once more he wrapped it up and just went on feeling rich.

He has told me what he'll buy with his dollar, pretty soon.
He will buy a motor boat and will take me, some forenoon,
"'Cross the ocean to the place where the King of Europe is."
There is nothing he can't do with that boundless wealth of his.
He is mine and dear to me, and no joy from him I'd keep,
Yet some night when he's in bed wrapped in sweet and dreamless sleep

I would rob that child of mine of his dollar, if I knew
I could steal, along with it, his belief in what 'twould do.

BROTHER'S FAULTS

BROTHER has a lot of faults that distress me so:
T'other day he purposely whacked me on the toe.
'Nother time he dumped my things out my dolly's trunk,
Ya-in' at me when I cried, said 'twas "only junk."
Playin' golden pavement, why he all th' time stays "it"—
Gets right in our way until he simply must get hit.
Don't know what to do with him — bothers us to death.
Even worser when we scold — just a waste o' breath!

Brother waits until we start playin' dolls, an' then
He comes there an' spoils th' game — mercy me, these men!
Mocks us when we play grown-up, strews our dresses 'round,
Scattering our sewing things all about th' ground!
Leaves my playthings that he gets, all night in the dew —
Left my picture-puzzle, once — soaked it through an' through.
'Fraid if he keeps getting worse he will land in jail —
And the very worst of all, he's a tattle-tale!

CHILDREN ALL

THEY are pot-valiant all the garish day
And treat us parents with mere toleration —
Wearing the clothes for which we have to pay,
Eating the food we buy through tribulation.
But as the night draws on they closer creep,
And reach out hands to us for reassurance;
They snuggle close to us when they're asleep —
Child-courage in the dark has no endurance.

No need to pen another line to show it —
The likeness to our attitude to Him
Who guards us through the dark — all children know it! —
And when with tears of doubt our eyes grow dim.
Our troubles gone — we strut and think us fearless,
Laugh at our night-time qualms, and proudly stand.
But darkness finds us timorous and cheerless
And groping for a strong, protecting Hand.

BOY DREAMS

THE boy is trifling idly with a stick and piece of string,
But you can't tell what he's dreaming all the while.
His boyish fancy soars upon a strong and fearless wing,
And you can't tell what he's dreaming all the while.
Some day the world may stand aghast with wonder and amaze,
May rend the very firmament with sycophantic praise
For ill or good that must result from these, his dreaming days —
No, you can't tell what he's dreaming all the while.

He whistles tunelessly and shrill and swings upon the gate,
But you can't tell what he's dreaming as he swings.
His thinking's culmination may decide a nation's fate,
For we can't tell what he's dreaming while he swings.
He may lay the dream away until some unborn, crucial year;
He may hide it till the dawning of another era's here;
But 'tis living, strength'ning, growing, and its fruitage must appear —
No, we know not what he's dreaming as he swings.

'Tis formless yet and vague past wish or power to express;
None may fathom where his fateful fancy gropes.
It lies, mayhap, far, far beneath his boyish consciousness,
Yet its spell is strong upon him when he "mopes."
It may miss its full fruition — bolder dreamers may prevail;
It may end in disappointment — even dearest dreams may fail;
But forever there in Boyland every dream-craft is a-sail;
In those dreams live all earth's dangers — and her hopes!

THE KEENEST PLEASURE

WE are so built, we human things,
That we may touch joy's deepest springs
Now and again. We should be glad
That real pleasure may be had
From our accomplishment of what
Our brains conceived, our two hands wrought.
But still the finest joy, indeed,
Is seeing some one else succeed.

'Tis only now and then that we
Can bring the longed-for thing to be
That we ourselves had planned and dreamed,
That we had plotted for and schemed.
So if our only triumphs come
When we have crowned with doing, some
Of our own plans, we miss a lot
Of earthly joy we might have got!

For all the time some one's succeeding
In some great thing that had been breeding
In mind and soul of him; and so
A sympathetic joy we know
When he brings triumph out of chaos
And with his vict'ry song would stay us.
This makes of earth a Neighborhood ——
Our joy when some one else makes good.

THE NIGHTLY TRANSFER

I GO to sleep in Brother's bed;
'Cause when his "Now I lay me" 's said
(He's two years littler yet than me)
He's just as bad as he can be
Unless somebody stays with him.
So Mother makes the light all dim
And leaves us there. I always think
I'll stay awake and never blink.
And then I shut my eyes a bit —
They always ache so, and won't quit!

But Mother knows, some way or other.
She tells me: "Lie to right of Brother,
So when your father comes to do
The transfer act you're right-end-to,
And he can lift you as you are
And lay you down without a jar."

And, sure enough, next thing I know
It's morning and the roosters crow,
And I'm in bed, somehow or other,
All by myself and not with Brother!

ASLEEP AMONG HIS TOYS

I FOUND my babe asleep among his toys.
A quarter-hour I'd missed his jocund noise
And wondered what so quieted the lad,
Saying: "He's never still unless he's bad."
But when I tiptoed in — Love's stealthy spy —
A touching picture met my doting eye:
One hand lay on the engine of his train,
The other grasped a tiny aeroplane:
Upon his face a world-old look of care —
Mankind in miniature lay dreaming there!

I lifted him and hugged him to my breast,
Kissed him, and laid him gently down to rest
Upon a couch. The weary limbs relaxed;
The puckered brow, with wondering overtaxed,
Released its troubled frown; and with a sigh
Of deep relief he slumbered on. While I,
With murmured words of choking tenderness,
Smoothed his warm cheek, his hands, his wrinkled dress —
Did all the things we love-mad parents do —
Old, old caresses that are ever new.

Sometime the great, kind Father of us all,
Noting we make no answer to His call,
Tiptoeing in to where we've been at play
Through all the hours of our allotted day,
Will find us 'mid our playthings, fast asleep,
Our toys about us in a tumbled heap,

Each weary hand upon a trinket laid —
Some phantom hope born in the marts of trade.
Then, in His arms, the cares our hearts possessed
Will yield their place to sweet and dreamless rest.

EACH day she spoils her happiness
By picking out the hardest thing
For her to get — a snowy dress
Upon her child who loves to fling
Dust by the handfuls in the air
And grime himself; a special shade
Of goods that she has seen somewhere;
A certain *outré* width of braid —
Something exceeding hard to get,
But that she has to have or fret.

So, though the sun shine warm for her,
And though the day be bright for her,
The world holds aye a storm for her,
And nothing e'er is right for her.

Another says: "I must decide
Which are life's big things, which the small.
If naught of cogent harm betide
My loved ones, which are best of all
That I possess; if I can keep
My wonted health and know no lack
Of needful clothing, food and sleep,
No trifles that bestrew my track
Can trouble me; and I shall praise
The Giver of my glorious days."

So though the small things oft go wrong,
The larger joys of life are hers;
Her lips are aye attuned to song,
And she keeps sweet, whate'er occurs.

PRECEDENT

I AM the coward's fortress and his friend.
When his poor courage trickles to an end
He pleads with me to guide his faltering feet —
He finds my ready consolation sweet.
That ofttimes I am wrong is naught to him —
He clings to me with desperation grim.

Each herd of elephants selects one wise
Old pachyderm to go ahead, where lies
The soft morass. They follow in his spoor.
The tracks grow deeper. Ere they've crossed the moor
The hindermost bogs down because he feared
To tread the ground the others' feet had cleared.

And I am that — the deep spoor in the mire;
Cold ashes in the place where once was fire
O'er which the hidebound dotard chafes his palms.
I am the soother of the weakling's qualms.
Yet this remember: None has served mankind
Who did not leave my pleasing self behind.

WIFEY'S WAY

SHE has never seen him wildly, uncontrollably joy-jagged
When the two of them went calling or to spend the evening out.
She has seldom seen him looking otherwise than slightly fagged —
He's a business man beginning to grow bald and rather stout.
Not unhappy — just a typical American, you know,
With a solemn look that tells you he has worries of his own.
He's a drudge, and rather likes it, likes to watch his business grow,
But she's sure he's out to frivol when he goes somewhere alone!

She has never seen a symptom indicating giddiness
As a quality of hubby's; he's a glutton for his toil.
He's as steady as old Dobbin, in his food and in his dress,
And his wildest dissipation is to scheme and plan and moil.
Though she knows it — yes, and trusts him in a good and wifely way,
Though she often faults him grimly for a dull, unsocial drone,

Yet she has a sort of feeling that sometimes he's
madly gay,
And she's sure he's raising hades when he goes
away alone.

LIFE'S SMELTER

LO, here are the ricks of red, red dust.
Lo, there are the cairns of coke.
The one is as dead as a day long fled,
One cold as the berg's fog-smoke.
(For you can't descry with a glance of the eye,
And you can't discern by the feel,
The ultimate worth of the things of earth
When Fate shall have turned her wheel.)

There's razor-edge steel in the red, red dust.
There is hell's own heat in the coke —
Though some be loss and some be dross
And some go away in smoke.
(No, you can't descry with the physical eye,
Nor guess from the physical feel,
The potential worth of the things of earth
When Fate shall have whirled her wheel.)

Now you — let's say — are the red, red dust;
And I — let's play — am the coke.
We may useless seem as we drift and dream,
With meaningless wail and croak.
But the wheel of Fate turns soon or late,
And we meet in the forging fire,
Which will show, at last, why our lots were cast
So far from our heart's desire.

RICE AMONG THE LOWLY

RICE on the day-coach platform — poor folks
are wed to-day!
Taking their trip to somewhere, thirty odd miles
away!
She in her dove-tint poplin, he with his neck all
shaved —
Wondering, both a-tremble, how such a crowd they
braved!
Many as twenty people, all at the house at once!
She was a-thrill, bride-fashion, he felt a fearful
dunce.
Now they're away — don't watch 'em, drummer-
inclined-to-tease!
Rice on the day-coach platform — God will be
good to these.

Rice on the day-coach platform — sleeping car fare
would take
All that the happy bridegroom in half of a week
could make.
Trip to his aunt's in Hayville, home in a day or
two —
Bride with the trip to Europe, she is as glad as
you!
Less than she wants? Who hasn't! Less than a
girl deserves?
Not if the lad be loyal; not if their love ne'er
swerves.

Humble her lot since childhood, simple the joys
she's known —
Rice on a day-coach platform, queen on a humble
throne!

Rice on a day-coach platform —" couple of rubes,"
you say?
Peace! For Somebody's Daughter emptied two
hearts to-day;
Somebody's son did likewise. Funny? I cannot
see
Just where the jest is, brother — stupid. of course,
in me.
Rice on a day-coach platform brings to the waiting
world
More than the same white kernels at Pullmans
palatial hurled.
Watch the old grandma smiling — kindly old eyes
a-blur —
Rice on a day-coach platform started her Life for
her!

THE 'LOWANCE

PLEASE, missus, if you wouldn't mind, I'd like
a piece o' cake.
We're out of it at our house an' dono when we'll
bake.
An' if you give me any bread, put plenty butter
on —
Mine's been so thin-spread lately that I'm feelin'
kindo' gone.
Here comes my brother — would you mind a-givin'
some t' him?
For mother's on a 'lowance an' we're livin' sorto'
slim.

Some speaker down to mother's club said every
wife should be
A independent person, as it were, financialee.
She "ought to have her 'lowance every week an'
plan ahead
What she would spend an' what she'd save," that's
what that woman said.
When mother told my pa, he laughed an' said:
"I gotcha, dear.
It's takin' all that I can grab — let's see how
much you'll clear."

Since then — you see this dress o' mine? I've
wore it all this week.
Ma says: "We've got a bad disease — it's name
is money-leak."

She drives us from th' telephone we used to use
so much,
An' pa says ma is gettin' "nearly close enough t'
touch."
So please, ma'am, if you wouldn't mind, feed me
an' Brother Jim —
Ma's workin' on a 'lowance an' we're livin' kindo'
slim.

STRAWBERRY MOUNTAINS

OH! A wonderful range are the Strawberry Hills
With their snow-caps of sugar and cream!
With the Valley of China where sluggishly spills
The yellow and succulent stream!
'Tis a marvelous sight that I mean to take in
In the earnestest sense of the word.
In the lives where these Strawberry Hills have not been,
Very little of note has occurred.

What a pleasure to browse o'er the Strawberry Hills
Ankle-deep in the sugary drift,
And to wade through the deeps of the broad, creamy rills
Over many a crevasse and rift!
And the red and the white and the cream of it all
Make a sight one can never forget —
Oh! The Strawberry cliffs with their summits so tall
Are the finest sierras found yet!

'Tis in June that we clamber the Strawberry Hills
And feed on their snow-crusted slopes;
'Tis a prospect that makes us forget all our ills
And live on our dreams and our hopes.

We can wait all the year with the patience of Job
For the time of all times to come 'round
When the Strawberry Hills with their snow-sugar robe
In Chinadish vale shall be found.

MY sister Annie's five years old, I'm seven, Fred is nine.
I come to Freddie's shoulder, little Annie comes to mine.
We look like human stairsteps when they stand us in a row,
For visitors at our house have always told us so.
I often wonder how 'twould seem if some one tried to walk
From Annie's head to mine an' his, as all those people talk!

One night along near Christmas time, when Annie'd left her bed
An' come to me where I'd been put along with brother Fred,
Our parents tiptoed up to see if we were safe asleep;
An' I nudged Fred and Ann to see how still we all could keep.
They stood beside an' whispered, with their arms around each other —
I peeked at them between my lids, an' Annie did, an' brother.

'Twas father murmured: "Little steps, oh, whither do you lead?"
An' mother softly answered back: "To heaven, says my creed."

"A golden causeway," father said. "They've drawn us nigh each other —
Two lovely girls and one, thank God, a husky elder brother."
An' then we heard our mother say, in laugh-and-tear-mixed tone:
"'Step children,' yet we'll Christmas them as if they were our own."

THE WISE MAN

HE knew — and kept as still with it,
And had his quiet will with it,
As though it were a secret craved
By every nation that has braved
Earth's changing moods — he slyly knew
Where bloomed the earliest violet blue;
And where the first spring beauty raised
Her pink-streaked face to God, and praised
Him for His goodness; knew as well
Where first the wind-flower decked the dell.

He knew, precisely to the day,
When first the raucous-noted jay
Would flirt his tail and toss his cap
And dare the squirrel to a scrap.
And robins — why he was as sure
When they would make their northward tour
As anything on earth could be,
And yet, despite his knowledge, he
Compiled no books nor wrote long screeds
About his wilder comrades' deeds.

I asked him once just why he stayed
So still about it; and he made
This answer: "I have no desire
To prattle of the burgeoning briar
And of the furred and feathered folk
Who chirp or chatter, scream or croak.

They are my friends — their confidence
I must respect, or give offense.
Besides," he quaintly smiled, "you see
They never, never tell on me!"

"IT DIDN'T HURT"

"IT didn't hurt!" I hear my baby call.
By this I know the lad has had a fall.
Grievous must be the bruise ere he admit
That he has suffered ache or pain from it.

"It didn't hurt!" The cry comes oft before
His small, o'erbalanced body strikes the floor —
A prophecy defiant to the fates
That trip pedestrian novitiates.

"It didn't hurt!" If thus he march through life,
Forswearing all defeat in every strife
That rises to retard his pilgrim way,
God bless the lad! He'll be a Man some day!

"WORKING TOO HARD"

I KNOW of no task that is softer than this —
(It's easier, even, than "stealing" a kiss
From a maid who has left it exposed, in the hope
Some thief would go by — am I wrong in my dope?)
Just to hail some poor chap who a task wouldn't touch
And make him believe he is working too much!

If half of the people we diagnose thus
Were to get out and really kick up a fuss
With half of the work they could do, which is twice
What most of us do, why the world in a trice
Would lose half the troubles with which it is marred —
There's nobody living that's working too hard!

THE ELDER BROTHER

SOMETIMES at night they leave the lad with me,
When I must "bone" with civics, trig. or Greek.
Then, though he's safe asleep and I am free,
There's something yet unnamed that makes me sneak
Into his bedroom and switch on the light
And turn the pillow's cool side to his face,
And tuck the covers 'round his neck just right,
Then sigh and tiptoe gently from the place.

When they come home, I do not tell them this;
But feign a vast and bored indifference.
For worlds I would not own the poignant bliss
I find in some new, fine protective sense.
It is too sweet for me to babble of
Or to indulge it where it might be seen.
But something whispers this is parent-love
In its first stirrings; and it keeps me clean.

GOING A PIECE

ALWAYS, when I went away —
Were it night or were it day —
You would "go a piece" with me
To the corner maple-tree;
Or, if I were going far,
You would see me to the street
Where I'd catch my depot car.
You have never known how sweet,
Till I hurried home again,
Did this memory remain!

Through the travel loneliness
Life was never pure distress;
Never did my cup seem all
Filled with wormwood and with gall.
No, for everywhere I went —
Homesick ever, as you know —
Pining was with loving blent.
For it comforted me so,
When my heart looked back, to see
You had "gone a piece" with me!

When my last long trip I take —
Lagging, for my loved-ones' sake —
Faring forth into the murk,
All the phantom shapes that lurk
In the darkness round my way
Will be terrorless if I

(When the others come to say
Through their transient tears, "Good-by")
In that twilight hour, may be
Sure you'll "go a piece" with me!

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